National, Religious, and Linguistic Identity Construction
within an Internationalized University:
Insights from Students in Egypt

Submitted by Sanaa Khabbar to the University of Exeter
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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other university.

Signature: …….

## Abstract

The last two decades have set the global trend of internationalized education on a new course. Besides the usual flow of international students from their home countries to Western universities, an opposite flow emerged. In the Middle East, for instance, the number of international campuses nearly doubled between 2000 and 2009, and Egypt has been no exception. Starting 2003, Egypt has witnessed a remarkable surge of private international universities that use English as a medium of instruction, adopt foreign curricula and have partnerships with universities in Europe, North America, and recently Asia. This trend has raised identity loss concerns among many intellectuals and educational researchers whose worries mainly revolved around national, religious, and linguistic identities. This longitudinal qualitative study, thus, aimed to understand how Egyptian freshman students at an international University in Cairo construct and negotiate their national, religious and linguistic identities. A semi-structured interview was conducted with 12 students at three different points of their first year at the university, and a focus group was organized at the beginning of their second year. Results revealed a more complex picture than the widespread simplistic rhetoric about international universities' influence on students' identity construction. The participants' social and academic backgrounds and unique life experiences were an important factor in their identity construction and negotiation; they seemed to determine the ranking of those identities on their hierarchy of identities, which in turn shaped how they constructed and negotiated them. Moreover, participants realized and used their agency to negotiate their identities and resolve identity crises when these happened. They also resorted to other identity agents, particularly family and students' clubs. This study contributes to the Egyptian debate on educational reform and adds to the literature on English as a medium of instruction, identity formation, and internationalized education by shedding light on the intricate ways in which students navigate through international education, and by suggesting pedagogical and policy implications applicable not only to liberal-education institutions in the region, but perhaps also to other universities in Europe and North America that attract international students, particularly with the recent waves of refugees from the Middle East.

# Dedication

To my parents Aicha Rafii and Ismail Khabbar, who passed on before they could see me cross the finish line of this arduous marathon. . . before they could see their long-cherished wish come true… Without your continuous encouragements, sacrifices, and prayers, I could not possibly have done it… May this small achievement of mine be a tiny pebble in the edifice of your legacy…May your beautiful souls rest in peace…

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## List of Acronyms

| | |
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| EMI: | English as a Medium of Instruction |
| AUC: | The American University in Cairo |
| CAPMAS: | Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics |
| IT: | Identity Theory |
| LEAD: | The Leadership for Education and Development |
| SA: | Standard Arabic |
| ECA: | Egyptian Colloquial Arabic |
| ECESR: | The Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights |
| HUSS: | Humanities and Social Sciences |
| IB: | International Baccalaureate |
| UNDP: | United Nations Development Program |
| SIT: | Social Identity Theory |
| OECD: | The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| NGOs: | Non-governmental Organizations |
| GATS: | The General Agreement on Trade in Services |
| ISESCO: | The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UAE: | The United Arab Emirates |
| KSA: | The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia |
| IGCSE: | The International General Certificate of Secondary Education |
| RHET: | Rhetoric and Composition |
| GPA: | Grade Point Average |
| TESOL: | Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages |
| EIL: | English as an International Language |
| EFL: | English as a Foreign Language |
| HE: | Higher Education |
| FYE | First-Year Experience |
| ELI | English Language Institute |

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# CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Egypt has always struggled with its educational system. In a country where ministers often remain in their positions for many years, several education ministers have been appointed over the last decade, each with a different educational agenda. Between 2010 and 2013, four ministers have been appointed, one of whom lasted only eight months in his position. This has resulted in contradictory policies that supposedly aimed to revive the terminally-ill national educational system, a system plagued with all sorts of problems at its primary, secondary and tertiary stages.

Public universities, for instance, have been suffering from a myriad of issues including "limited course curricula, overcrowded classrooms, underpaid faculty, expensive but often necessary private tutoring and unfair grading procedures" (Cook, 1999, p. 99). One of the attempted rescue remedies was the passing of Law 101 in 1992 that allowed the establishment of privately-owned universities (Cook, 1999); since then, Egypt has witnessed an unprecedented surge of private universities, most of which use English as a medium of instruction (EMI), adopt foreign curricula and have partnerships with universities in Europe, the United States, and recently Asia. This has raised identity loss concerns among many.

## 1.1 Foreign Universities Debate

Up till 1996, the American University in Cairo (AUC), founded in 1919 by a group of American Dutch Reformed Church officers, was the only *foreign* university in Egypt (AUCa, 2011). Its accreditation website states that it

> operates within the framework of a 1975 protocol with the Egyptian government, which in turn is based on a 1962 cultural relations agreement between the Egyptian and U.S. governments. In the United

> States of America, AUC is licensed to grant degrees and is incorporated by the state of Delaware. (AUCb, 2017)

However, in the last few years, Egypt has witnessed an unprecedented spread of “foreign” universities; namely, the German University in Cairo (2003), the British University in Egypt (2004), Al-Ahram Canadian University (2005), the French University in Egypt (2006), The Egyptian Russian University (2006), Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology (2008), and very recently The Egyptian Chinese University (2013). The term “foreign” universities is not a very exact term; although these universities, with the exception of the American University in Cairo, have been founded by presidential decrees as Egyptian private universities, they are referred to by the media and by Egyptians as “foreign” universities. Yet, other Egyptian private universities that use foreign curricula are not referred to as foreign.

The language of instruction in all these universities is English except for the French University in Egypt that teaches in French, English and Arabic. This educational orientation is in fact being followed in several other countries in the region; “between 2000 and 2009, the number of Australian, British and American campuses in the Middle East increased almost two-fold, going from 140 to 260 campuses” (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015, p. 6).

The sudden mushrooming of private universities that adopt foreign curricula and teach in a foreign language has heated the already existing debate about foreign education in pre-tertiary institutions. On one side of the debate, are those who see international education as a life buoy that has landed just in time to save the sinking educational system; on the other hand, are those who view it as a new form of cultural imperialism; whereas in the middle are those who believe that students are not passive recipients because

they negotiate both local and incoming cultures creating a third-space or their own hybrid cultures.

This debate is rooted in Egypt's colonial experience that "has left distressing memories in the consciousness of Egyptian society towards the West" (Cook, 1999, pp. 209-210); "Egyptian collective memory recalls that historically, foreign (Western) influence has created a cultural dichotomy in education aimed at disassociating young Egyptians from their national culture and identity, a belief that reinforces the conspiracy theory" (Sayed, 2006, p. 39).

### 1.2 Foreign Education: An Old Debate in a New Guise

The introduction of foreign education in Egypt goes back to the end of the 18th Century. Heyworth-Dunne (1939) traces back "the first school in Egypt where a western language was taught" to 1732 when the Franciscans built a church and convent in Cairo with an attached school that taught both Arabic and Italian (p. 90). To understand the foreign education debate in Egypt, one must examine it in light of the old modernity/secularity- authenticity controversy in Egypt and the Arab world and their complex hate-love relationship with the West. Cook (1999) explained that "[w]hile Egyptians are genuinely averse to many aspects of Western life, they experience simultaneous fascination with the West, particularly its stress on technology, individuality and materialism" (p. 20).

The French Expedition to Egypt in 1799 was a turning point in the history of Egypt. Vatikiotis (1985) observed that despite the obvious military failure of Bonaparte's expedition, its scientific and educational outcomes for Egypt were tremendous; Egyptians were amazed not only by Bonaparte's military ability but also by the French Revolution ideas (as cited in Cook 1999, p. 60). It was after this expedition "that a number of people, men of letters and politicians alike,

began asking themselves questions such as: Why have we got so left behind? Why is the West so advanced? How did they do it? What must we do to catch up?" (Maalouf, 2000, p. 63).

The era from 1840 onwards witnessed a massive introduction of European education; "perhaps one of the most interesting features of the early nineteenth Century" (Heyworth-Dunne, 1939, p. 282). When Mohammed Ali became viceroy of Egypt (1805–1849), he engaged the country in an intensive modernizing process, motivated by his desire to establish a strong military similar to European armies. In the process, Egyptians were also exposed to European ideas related to economics and education. Thus, Muhammad Ali's fascination with the West incited him to establish educational institutions "modelled along European lines that could provide the requisite number of technicians, military officers, civil servants, and other personnel needed for modern state-building." He also sent numerous educational missions to Europe to study administration, engineering and military (Cook, 1999, pp. 62-63).

Muhammad Ali's transformation of Egypt has had long-lasting effects on several aspects of Egyptian life to this day. An important transformation was the creation of two completely different educational systems, "one based on the traditional *kuttab*[1] system and one based on the secular system geared toward the political advancement of the state" (Cook, 1999, p. 63). This duality has continued to this day and has engendered two different and competing identities. In fact, this dichotomy has had serious effects on "the ideological harmony of the country" and "a profound influence on the very fabric of Egyptian national identity" (Cook, 1999, p. 63). Kerr (1969) affirmed that this

[1]Quranic school

dichotomy caused by the forces of modernity and Westernization has caused a "polarized culture that has persisted to the present" (as cited in Cook, 1999, p. 20). Yasin (2009) confirmed the existence of such dichotomy; he argued that there is a struggle between two conflicting world views among Egyptian intellectuals; a secular liberal view and a closed religious one (p. 28). Overall, with heavy foreign interference,

> beginning with Napoleon's invasion in 1798 and continuing with Muhammad Ali's dynasty, Britain's 75 years of colonial rule, and the U.S. economic hegemony since 1973, Egypt has faced a legacy of cultural discontinuity. What remains is a country at odds with itself, struggling with a multitude of social and cultural inconsistencies while trying to develop an appropriate and effective educational system: a nation suffering the disquiet of cognitive dissonance. (Cook, 1999, p. 6)

### 1.3 Problem and Research Question

Despite the abundance of books and articles on the issue of foreign universities and identity in Egypt, only a few empirical studies have investigated the contradictory contentions made in those sources, contentions that mainly revolve around the loss of the national, religious, and linguistic identities of Egyptian students. To my knowledge, none of these empirical studies examined all three identities (national, religious, linguistic); most of them either focused solely on EMI and language identity or else included the other two identity components but lumped them together under Arabness or cultural identity without examining each identity separately. No studies, for example, researched religious identity, although some brushed on it *en passant*. None of the studies on identity construction in Egypt referred to Christian students or examined whether they experience global education or negotiate their religious and linguistic identities differently, given the absence in Christianity of the bond

between the Arabic language and religion that exists in Islam. A further void in the literature is that most studies conducted in Egypt dealt with primary and secondary school students; only a few studied university students, and only one included AUC students in its sample, but none of them is longitudinal, and most of them are quantitative.

Another observation worth mentioning is that the majority of the studies done in Egypt have been written in Arabic and conducted by researchers who are affiliated with state universities that teach in Arabic, which raises the question of whether their lack of familiarity with foreign universities such as the AUC has a role in their apprehension and suspicion of English and of foreign education. Many outsiders to AUC, even freshman students, usually arrive to AUC with several widely-spread stereotypes about the AUC community, mainly that it is extremely westernized, not in touch with Egyptian reality, and detached from its Egyptian and Arab roots.

The current study, thus, aims to contribute to filling the above research gaps by using qualitative methodology and methods and a longitudinal research design that allow for a deep understanding of the unique experiences of AUC students in relation to their identity construction and negotiation. It examines each of the national, religious, and linguistic components of their identities separately without overlooking how they interrelate. It does not only look at the linguistic aspect of foreign education, that it uses English as a medium of instruction; rather, it looks at foreign education in its entirety; i.e. the liberal curriculum, the foreign teachers, and the extra-curricular activities. Moreover, it includes Christian students and gives them a voice, unlike other studies that have perhaps included them but never discussed their identity construction separately, brushing aside their peculiarity as a minority whose Christian

heritage is usually marginalized in the official Egyptian discourse including in the educational curriculum, perhaps because of the belief that doing otherwise and highlighting their uniqueness could weaken the national fabric.

The present study specifically attempts to understand how AUC students construct and negotiate their national, religious, and linguistic identities by first understanding the kinds of identities they come to AUC with, and then tracing the changes their identities go through. It answers the following research question:

> How do freshman Egyptian AUC students construct and negotiate their national, religious, and linguistic identities in the context of this foreign higher-education institution?

### 1.4 Significance of the Research

The foreign education debate and the deeper and older tension towards the West, coupled with the dissonance between modernity and authenticity that are characteristic not only of Egypt but of most Arab and Muslim societies (Najjar, 1996; Cook, 2000), make questions of identity crucial. As a matter of fact, a simple look at the news headlines shows that questions of cultural, religious, national, and linguistic identities are a matter of concern all around the world. At the root of most, perhaps all, ongoing political conflicts are issues of identity (Maalouf, 2000). The cognitive and political divide in the Egyptian society post the 2011 Revolution was caused by the following question: is Egypt Islamic or secular? A divide that culminated in the ousting of President Morsi by those who believed that the Egyptian identity was being hijacked by Islamists. Another example that shows how the misunderstanding and misuse of identity could be the main cause of most political conflicts are the rising anti-immigrant

and anti-refugee feelings in parts of Europe and the United States fuelled by perceived threats to Europe's and America's cultural and/or religious identities and fear of the religiously-and-culturally-different other, a fear that led to several violent incidents, the latest of which was the Charlottesville incident that took place, on 12 August 2017, in Virginia whereby a white supremacist rammed his car into an anti-far-right demonstration killing one person and injuring several others. A further example is the radical Islamists' rhetoric that opposes almost everything western; democracy along western lines, western dress, education, and "colonial" languages for fear that they eradicate Islamic identity. In this part of the world whose "long and complicated history with English-speaking nations, […] unique culture and native language, […] currently extremely large expatriate community, […] youthfulness, and the fact that it is a region undergoing rapid change, make the issue of cultural identity particularly relevant and pressing" (Hopkyns, 2015, p. 6), it becomes very important to understand how identities are constructed, away from the black-and-white slippery-slope rhetoric that reduces the issue into either complete loss of identity or complete rejection of difference.

Being a graduate of the English department in a state university in Morocco who moved to an American-modelled private university for her post-graduate studies, and who afterwards taught English at three private universities in Egypt, besides being a mother who had to make choices related to her children's educational trajectories, I have often found myself in the midst of this debate about education and foreign/international education. I have specifically pondered over issues of national, religious, and language identity. Reflecting on my own trajectory, I recall moments of distress during the first semester of my post-graduate studies after reading an article or attending a

class discussion that challenged my religious beliefs; I recall the frustration of remaining silent because of my inability to defend those beliefs properly. I also remember struggling with my linguistic and national identities after moving in 1998 to Egypt, that turned out to be much more culturally different from Morocco than I had expected; I remember being repeatedly told that Moroccan Arabic is “broken” Arabic and asked why Moroccans used a lot of French in their language. But, I also know that my education in an EMI university that taught American curricula, and my teaching in EMI foreign universities have not made me any less of a proud Arab and Muslim, and the move to Egypt has made me an even prouder Moroccan than I had been before I left Morocco.

Over my fourteen years of teaching freshman students at two private foreign EMI universities in Cairo, I have come to see students that seemed alienated from their Arab-Islamic and Egyptian heritage, other students that underwent a cultural shock when joining the liberal AUC, others that seemed solidly-rooted in their Egyptian culture, and also some that challenged my then-stereotypical expectations; one particular student whose attire and attitude were very much along American lines, who played the guitar in concerts, spoke fluent American-English, brought some of my unconscious assumptions into light, when he told me that he went to an Islamic school, was proficient in Standard Arabic (SA) and had learned large Quran chapters as a child because his parents had suddenly decided to adopt a more religious lifestyle. So, I became even more interested in seeing beyond my own prejudices and beyond society’s generalizations and stereotypes, beyond both conspiracy theory and blind embracement of international education. I wanted to be a better-informed educator who facilitates her students’ learning, encourages them to be open to different worldviews without losing their cultural roots and pride. I wanted to

understand in depth how my AUC students construct and negotiate their national, religious, and language identities. Hence, the topic of this research.

## 1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters: Chapter I introduces the topic of the thesis, gives general background, highlights its significance, and states the problem and research questions. Chapter II provides context for the topic by explaining the general historic, social and educational Egyptian context as well as the more immediate context of AUC. Chapter III reviews the literature on relevant concepts, namely globalisation and education, identity theories, and national, religious, and linguistic identities' formation. Chapter IV outlines the theoretical and methodological frameworks and describes the sampling, data collection and data analysis procedures. It also discusses the ethical considerations. Chapter V presents data analysis. Chapter VI discusses the study's findings in light of previous literature. Last, chapter VII summarizes the main findings, presents their implications for stakeholders, discusses the study's limitations and makes suggestions for future research.

# CHAPTER 2: Context of the Study

This chapter contextualizes the research by first introducing some socio-cultural and educational factors and dilemmas necessary for readers, especially those unfamiliar with the Egyptian context, to better understand the results, implications and importance of the study. The chapter then presents information about the immediate context in which the study was conducted by highlighting AUC's unique academic and community features.

## 2.1 The General Context

**2.1.1 Egypt.** The Arab Republic of Egypt is the largest Arab country in terms of its population which, according to the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), has exceeded 91 million people (CAPMASa, 2015). This large population is unfortunately poorly distributed on Egypt's twenty-seven governorates, with most of the population concentrated on the fertile but tiny banks of the Nile and Delta. The most densely-populated governorates are Cairo and Giza with 9,537,840 and 7,866,789 inhabitants respectively (CAPMASa, 2015); this density is due to their being the most privileged governorates in terms of services and opportunities –such as medical, educational and employment opportunities- followed by Alexandria governorate. All other governorates are marginalized in various forms and degrees.

Religion, in its cultural form, plays an important role in the lives of most Egyptians both in the private and public spheres; It is, according to Egypt State Information Service (SIS), "the main source of the cultural and intellectual heritage of the Egyptian people" (SISa, 2016) including non-practicing Muslims and Christians. While the majority of Egyptians are Muslims, there is a minority

of Christians, “the largest Christian minority in the Arab world (mainly Copts but also some Anglicans, Catholics, Russian and Greek orthodox)” (Bassiouney, 2017, p.42). They constitute 8% of the population according to the CAPMAS 2013 census. This number, however, has been contested by the Coptic Church that estimates the Coptic population to be between 15 and 18 million. There is also an extremely small Jewish community that has shrunk to only seven people (Thabet, 2005). According to articles (2) and (3) of Egypt’s 2014 constitution “Islam is the religion of the State and Arabic is its official language. The principles of Islamic Sharia are the main source of legislation” and “[t]he principles of Christian and Jewish Sharia of Egyptian Christians and Jews are the main source of legislations that regulate their respective personal status, religious affairs, and selection of spiritual leaders” (SISb, 2016).

The Egyptian society is very much communitarian and collectivist. In their famous 1998 book *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business*, where they published “The Seven Dimensions of Culture” model, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner reported that the Egyptian culture “ranked 40 or last in Individualism (making it the most collectivist of those measured)” (As cited in Husain & McMullen, 2010, p. 119). The Egyptian culture emphasizes family values,

> (allegiance to the network of parents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and other extended family members) […] This family-centric aspect of Egyptian culture, combined with Islam’s third pillar of zakat – in which Muslims are enjoined to give 2.5% of their wealth annually in alms to the poor and needy – helps shape the communitarian ethos widely prevalent in Egypt. (Husain & McMullen, 2010, p. 119)

Egypt, like other Arab countries, is a diglossic community with two varieties of Arabic that have different functions “an H variety - in our case,

Standard Arabic (SA) and an L variety - in our case, Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA)" (Bassiouney, 2012, p. 108). SA is mainly used in writing; it is the official language used in education, public administration, most literary works, and religious rituals like prayer and reading the Bible and the Quran. Christians, however, also use Coptic language, derived from ancient Egyptian, for several liturgical functions.

Although English is taught from the elementary stage at both public and private Egyptian schools, most graduates of the public sector are non-functional in English. The mediocre public educational system, where most Egyptians are educated, does not qualify students to use English. It is usually the graduates of international/foreign schools who can use English with ease. English is associated with social prestige, and is also one of the important keys to securing a good job.

**2.1.2 The 2011 Revolution.** In January 2011, Egypt witnessed a critical turning point in its modern history as the Egyptian people ousted President Hosni Mubarak. This political upheaval had its echoes within AUC as well; like everywhere else in Egypt, AUCians' discussions revolved mainly around politics; several political activists and public figures, including Salafist presidential candidate Hazem Abu Ismail, were invited for public debates and lectures; the AUC community engaged in controversial discussions about the renaming of Suzanne Mubarak's hall, named after Egypt's previous first lady, in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUSS) building; in February 2012, an AUC student, Omar Mohsen, was among 74 Ahli fans who died in the Port Said Stadium massacre. AUC repeatedly found itself involved in - sometimes dragged into - political events. The location of AUC's old campus on Tahrir Square, the focal point of the 2011 revolution, and Mohamed Mahmoud Street,

stage to multiple clashes between the police forces and the demonstrators made it literally in the heart of the Revolution. On different occasions, AUC was subject to serious accusations. In 2012, for instance, the head of the National Security Agency accused AUC of "practic[ing] "suspicious" activities and incit[ing] the violence on Mohamed Mahmoud Street and at the cabinet sit-in at the end of last year [2011]" (*Egypt Independent*, 2012). In the same year, the defence lawyer of former minister of interior Habib Al-Adly claimed that AUC security personnel were involved in shooting Tahrir Square demonstrators. In response to those allegations, the AUC issued several statements to defend its personnel, such as the following email sent to all AUC community in June 2012:

> On Tuesday, June 12, 2012 in the proceedings of the trial of the battle of the camel, Aly Ahmed Dergham, a lawyer in the case, claimed that the University has firearms on its Tahrir Square campus and asked that its staff be considered suspects. The American University in Cairo vehemently denies any role in the battle of the camel or the killing of protesters. Furthermore, the University does not have any firearms on its campus. All members of the Tahrir Square campus security staff are Egyptians and do not carry firearms at anytime. The American University in Cairo has cooperated fully in the investigation of the January 2011 events and will continue to do so.
> In response to several media reports of these allegations, the University will be issuing an official response. (News@auc, 2012)

The battle of the camel mentioned in the above email refers to violent clashes on Tahrir square between "Mubarak supporters— some called them state-sponsored thugs ("baltaguiya")" (El-Bendary, 2013. p. 68) and anti-Mubarak protesters on February 2, 2011 when the former unexpectedly stormed the square on camel and horseback and attacked the protesters. In the evening of that same day, another attack on the protesters took place, this time with "gunshots and Molotov cocktails [that] rained down on protesters from the

rooftops of what were later said to be the Mogamma (the biggest government employment building), the American University in Cairo, and the Cairo Museum" (El-Bendary, 2013. p. 68).

Another allegation, this time against AUC faculty, was published on a Facebook page named "The admin of the official page of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces". The admin wondered if:

> the American University is one of the tools used by the American administration and its security apparatus to demolish Egypt? A question that strongly imposes itself these days following widespread talk about and a call to civil disobedience. The strangest thing about this matter is the implementation of that scheme by Egyptian hands (100%); these are some of the faculty members who work at the university and who have begun a systematic mobilization of a group of 40 selected students to execute "demolishing Egypt by the hands of the sons of Egypt." (Hassan, 2012) [Translation mine]

The AUC Student Union issued a response statement on its Facebook page in which it objected to questioning the patriotism of any AUC students, faculty, or employees, and stressed that "the student movement at the American University is part and parcel of the Egyptian student movement, and that there is support for the strike and the civil disobedience on February11th just like other Egyptian universities, and not only 40 students as stated by the Facebook page" (Moustafa, 2012).

Another way in which the Revolution directly impacted AUC are the several strikes by AUC students and workers. Numerous labour strikes, demonstrations, vigils, and sit-ins were staged following the Revolution, particularly in 2012/2013. According to a report published in 2013 by the Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR), there were 3,817 labour strikes and economically-motivated social protests in 2012 alone

(Aboulenein, 2013). This revolutionary tide did not spare the AUC community; in September 2011 AUC students and workers protested for a whole week against an increase in tuition fees and low compensation respectively. The students defiantly "surround[ed] the office of the university president, Lisa Anderson. 'Get out thieves,' they chanted in an echo of the slogans used against Mubarak in Tahrir. 'Lisa, where did our money go?' demanded others" (Shenker, 2011). Classes were interrupted and several open forums took place, one of which ended up in students bringing down the American flag on campus. According to the student-run newspaper *The Independent*, bringing down the American flag occurred:

> when President Lisa Anderson reportedly left an open forum in the HUSS courtyard earlier than planned, even though she promised to answer questions the whole day […] AUC alumnus and activist Gigi Ibrahim further describes the incident as a peaceful one.
> "Taking down the flag was purely a symbolic, peaceful action which (President Anderson) was the main trigger of. The flag represents the principles, which Lisa stands for when she disrespected all the reasonable demands of the students. The students were angered and decided to bring down the flag and bring it to her office." (*Independent* Staff, 2011)

### 2.2 The Educational Context

Egypt adopted a free education policy in 1923. This free education is offered from primary school till post-graduate studies (Sayed, 2006, p. 65). Article (20) of the 2014 constitution of Egypt states that "Education in the State educational institutions shall be free of charge in its various stages" (SISb, 2016).

Since the 1990s, "basic education in Egypt has been referred to as a matter of 'national security' in every single presidential speech, ministerial press

release, and official governmental statement addressing the topic"; but these good intentions have never been translated into a reality by allocating sufficient state resources to education (Sayed, 2006, p. 27). Consequently, the Global Competitiveness Report (2015-2016) ranked Egypt 111 out of 140 countries in higher education and training (World Economic Forum, 2016). Johansen Eid, head of the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education in Egypt, contested the results as "greatly exaggerated", yet did not deny the huge education problems in Egypt, namely a high illiteracy rate and a large population coupled with a low education budget (ElShamy, 2015). In the most recent Global Competitiveness Report (2016-2017), Egypt went down to position 112 (Schwab, 2017, p. 169)

**2.2.1 Private tutoring.** Public education in Egypt is theoretically free, yet in practice it is not. Most students in the public sector depend on private tutoring; "three-fourths of the students in secondary schools depend on private lessons to pass their exams" (Cook, 1999, p. 191). This results in very low attendance rates, disrespect of school rules and neglect of assigned homework. On the other hand, teachers in the public sector resort to private tutoring to improve their income. Consequently, they neglect their classes and are absent most of the year. Even when they do attend their classes, they are too tired to perform properly. Sometimes teachers purposefully lower the quality of their teaching to force their students to take private lessons with them.

Private tutoring also exhausts the parents' financial resources (Ibrahim, 2000, p. 104); "according to a study by the government's National Institute of Planning, Egyptian parents in some cases pay as much as one-fourth of their incomes for private lessons to help their children through the exam" (Cook, 1999, p. 191). This amounted to 7 billion Egyptian pounds in 1996 while the

annual government budget for education for that same year was around LE 10 Billion (Mahfouz, 1996, as cited in Sayed, 2006, p. 67), which makes one infer that education is not really free (Sayed, 2006, p. 67). For government education to be truly free, Economist El-Baradei (2000) has argued, it should abolish all costs by exempting “poor children from the costs of health insurance, and providing school meals, textbooks, stationery as well as increasing the efficiency and quality of education” (as cited in Sayed, 2006, p. 67).

**2.2.2 Pre-university education.** Egypt, perhaps more than any other Arab country, has a hodgepodge of educational systems; religious-nonreligious, national-international, public-private. Within each of these types there are further divisions and interconnections; for example the national/public system includes normal and experimental schools whereby the former are for free whereas the latter offer relatively better education in return for a fee; different international schools offer different international curricula (German, French, British, American, International Baccalaureate (IB), Turkish, Pakistani), and were either founded by individuals or by the original countries of the curricula they offer. The language of education in public national schools is SA, whereas private national schools teach either in SA or in English. Private international schools, on the other hand, teach in a foreign language, usually English, a language that “has become one of the most powerful means of inclusion into or exclusion from further education, employment, or social positions” (Pennycook, 2001, as cited in Hopkyns, 2015, p. 7).

This hodgepodge of educational systems that starts from Kindergarten has intensified the already-existing social and economic rifts among Egyptians. Basyuni (2015) contended that this educational multiplicity divided the Egyptian people into different categories with different goals and cultures (p. 189). The

graduates of these different educational systems have different educational trajectories and study different curricula; for example, students in international schools usually study the history and geography of the countries from which their curricula have been adopted, and only a few schools also teach Egyptian history and geography. Consequently, their graduates tend to have different worldviews particularly when comparing international schools' graduates to their peers in national schools.

***2.2.2.1 Public schools.*** Egypt has been suffering for decades from the deterioration of its educational system despite numerous attempts of educational reform. In a country where many ministers usually remain in their positions for long years, several education ministers have been appointed, each with a different educational agenda. This has resulted in contradictory policies that were supposedly aimed to revive the terminally-ill educational system. A system plagued with all sorts of problems; "limited course curricula, overcrowded classrooms, underpaid faculty, […] unfair grading procedures"(Cook, 1999, p. 99), deteriorated and insufficient educational facilities and equipment (Hut, 2008, p. 49; Cook 1999, p. 190), "and often the use of one school building by three different schools lead to very poor-quality formal teaching in classes that does not prepare students adequately for exams," which created a crucial need for expensive private tutoring to prepare children for final exams. These private lessons have accentuated the inequity of the educational system by "condemning students with limited financial means to lower chances of passing exams and consequently fewer opportunities for socio-economic mobility" (Sayed, 2006, p. 71).

This myriad of problems pushed the lucky minority who can afford paying high tuition fees to resort to the private sector, while the majority is left with a

mediocre educational system. According to the 2015 human development report by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), 26.3% of Egypt's 90.2 million population live below poverty line (UNDP, 2015). Table 1 below shows the wide gap between the number of students in private and public pre-university institutions, whereby the latter host 9.5 times more students than private ones.

***2.2.2.2 Private international schools.*** Due to globalization, Egypt, like other countries, liberated its foreign trade and shifted its public spending from sectors like education and health to more productive ones. This economic liberation coupled with the mediocre state of public education led to the spread of private schools and universities. As explained in table 1 below, pre-university private education includes several types: general, industrial, agricultural, commercial, societal and special-needs. In this section, however, I only focus on general education because graduates of other types of education are extremely unlikely to join the AUC and as such are not relevant to this study. I particularly focus on international schools since all the students in my study come either from public schools or international ones.

International schools in Egypt were not created equal. The difference between them is huge in terms of education quality, fees, and prestige. Numerous schools call themselves international, adopt foreign names, and claim high standards without necessarily meeting the high international standards they claim. A quick surf of these schools' websites shows that most of them choose names that highlight their international and foreign aspects, and pride themselves on their foreign management and high ratio of foreign

teachers, when applicable. One of these schools has the following statement on its website under the heading “Our British Ethos”:

> […] International School, as its name implies, aims to provide our students with the very best of British and International education, whilst celebrating the magnificent history and culture of our host nation, Egypt […] The majority of our staff are British, or have trained in Britain or similar educational backgrounds.

*Table 1*

*Schools, Classes & Students by Sector & Educational Stage 14/2015 (CAPMASb, 2016, p. 122)*

| **Educational Stage** | **Private Sector** | | | **Governmental Sector** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Students | Classrooms | Schools | Students | Classrooms | Schools |
| Pre-Primary | 286 924 | 9 579 | 2 134 | 889 840 | 23 444 | 8 496 |
| Primary | 948 440 | 28 634 | 1 939 | 9306 857 | 203 155 | 15 908 |
| Preparatory | 302281 | 9 938 | 1 597 | 4220 821 | 97 921 | 9 631 |
| General Secondary | 185 524 | 6 095 | 1002 | 1349 540 | 32 921 | 2 112 |
| Industrial Secondary | 3 420 | 109 | 10 | 805 673 | 23 934 | 956 |
| Agricultural Secondary | - | - | - | 168 705 | 4 597 | 205 |
| Commercial Secondary | 101961 | 2 526 | 199 | 565 991 | 14 937 | 625 |
| Societal Education | - | - | - | 106 781 | 5 018 | 5 018 |
| Handicapped Education | 470 | 96 | 18 | 36 861 | 4 430 | 903 |
| **Total** | **1 829 020** | **56 977** | **6 899** | **17 451 069** | **410 357** | **43 854** |
| Source: Ministry of Education | | | | | | |

An Egyptian friend of mine was asked by the school management of the international school where she used to teach to tell her students' parents that she was half-American, which was not true. Attending international schools has also become a form of social bragging about wealth because of their high fees (See table 2 for an example of these high school fees).

*Table 2*

International Schools' Fees in 2016 *(Abdeltawab, 2016)*

| **Schools 2016** | **KG** [Kindergarten] | **Grad Year** | **Total KG -Final** | **Total EGP** [E£] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cairo American College | $ 23,300 | $ 24,000 | $ 329,900 | 2.928,100 |
| Malvern College Egypt | £ 9,500 | £ 15,000 | £ 172,000 | 2,150,000 |
| New Cairo British International School | £ 6,020 | £ 11,024 | £ 139,703 | 1,746,287 |
| Schultz American School | $ 10,100 | $ 14,230 | $ 177,280 | 1,577,792 |
| American International School in Egypt | $ 10,000 | $ 13,000 | $ 168,900 | 1,503,210 |
| British International School in Cairo | £ 8,482 | £ 11,020 | £ 119,214 | 1,490,174 |
| Modern English School | E£ 45,000 | E£ 98,000 | E£ 1,203,000 | 1,203,000 |
| Metropolitan School | E£ 40,000 | E£ 90,000 | E£ 1,100,000 | 1,100,000 |
| Cairo English School | £ 4,460 | £ 7,180 | £ 86,400 | 1,080,000 |
| British Columbia Canadian International School | E£ 40,000 | E£ 90,000 | E£ 1,065,000 | 1,065,000 |
| CIS - Canadian International School | E£ 57,000 | E£ 90,000 | E£ 972,000 | 972,000 |
| Alsson International School | E£ 54,000 | E£ 77,200 | E£ 957,000 | 957,000 |
| Hayah International Academy | E£ 27,240 +$1,645 | E£ 52,075 +$3,135 | E£ 595,305 +$35,830 | 914,192 |
| The International Schools of Choueifat | E£ 39,000 | E£ 80,000 | E£ 900,000 | 900,000 |
| Narmer American College | E£ 44,000 | E£ 76,000 | E£ 895,000 | 895,000 |
| Lycée International Balzac, Cairo | € 3,100 | € 6,575 | € 82,365 | 833,533 |
| Pakistan International School | $ 4,440 | $8,880 | $ 91,530 | 814,617 |
| El Gouna International School | E£ 41,000 | E£ 72,000 | E£ 786,000 | 786,000 |
| International School of Egypt | E£ 40,500 | E£ 64,900 | E£ 768,650 | 768,650 |

Sending one's children to international schools, undeniably, has several benefits; it allows them to learn one or more foreign languages, and provides them with high quality education that encourages critical thinking and independent learning habits, instead of the national system that relies on rote memorization of information and its regurgitation in final exams. However, Arabic, religion, Egyptian history and geography are often either marginalized or completely absent in the curricula of most international schools. Even those few schools that teach the Egyptian social studies, Arabic, and religion besides their international curricula are generally not giving these subjects sufficient attention due to the pressure on them to fulfil the requirements of the international curricula they teach, which in turn negatively affects the way these subjects are taught. The often traditional and non-innovative teaching methods, textbooks, and evaluation methods used to teach those subjects cause students to hate them. When I chose my children's school (An IB school that teaches in French) almost fourteen years ago, one of the key factors for making my decision was that it offered Arabic, religion and Egyptian social studies because I wanted my children to be global citizens open to the world yet aware and proud of their Arab, Egyptian, and Muslim heritage. However, I quickly became disappointed in and annoyed by those very same courses for the reasons stated above.

**2.2.3 Higher education.** Egypt has 23 state universities and 20 private universities (SISd, 2013). The major reason behind the need for private universities in Egypt, in addition to the global privatization trend, is the increasing number of students who join higher education as opposed to the limited number of state universities. Despite the World Bank's recommendation in 1979 that Egypt implements a radical decrease in the number of students admitted to tertiary education, in order to transfer more resources to primary

education and to alleviate the problem of unemployment among graduates, Egypt was not able to follow this recommendation (Mahmud & Nas, 2003, pp. 127-128).

***2.2.3.1 Public universities.*** The number of students in Egyptian universities continued to increase due to the social demand for higher education and the need for qualified university graduates who are able to deal with advanced technology and who master foreign languages (Mahmud & Nas, 2003, pp. 127-128).

Most Egyptians regard education as a means to attain social mobility, which creates a huge demand for education. Consequently, "the country's twelve national universities enrol up to five times the student capacity they were designed to accommodate, severely hampering academic standards and educational quality" (Cook, 1999, p. 94). One educator illustrates the lamentable state of Egyptian higher education as follows:

> Egyptian education is complete *fawda* (chaos). The notion of the professor being a mentor is completely impossible here in Egypt. Can you imagine if I assigned just one research assignment to my classes, it would take me months to read them all. Class discussion is out of the question and there is no way to know all of my students' names. There can be no one-on-one relationships because there is simply not enough time. (as cited in Cook, 1999, p. 94)

Another educator and professor of education, Farouk Moussa, admitted that what he learned in the fifties is the same as what he currently teaches (as cited in Mahmud & Nas, 2003, p. 275). The problem is even worse in technical universities where students should have hands-on experience. In fact, one of the reasons students in the Arab world resort to foreign education is the inability

of local curricula that lack development and creativity to satisfy their needs. During my fifteen years of teaching at private international universities in Cairo, I have repeatedly encountered students who transferred from national universities due to the huge numbers of students and the lack of hands-on experience. One of these students is Noha, a brilliant student who has now got a PhD from Cambridge University. After spending one semester at the medical school in Cairo University, Noha decided to renounce her dream of becoming a physician and transferred to a private foreign university in Cairo where she studied biotechnology instead of medicine. She recalled an anatomy class where a large crowd of students gathered around a corpse of which she could not have a single glimpse.

One of the remedies that were applied to alleviate the huge problems in public universities is the passing of Law 101 in 1992 that allowed the establishment of privately-owned universities (Cook, 1999, p. 99); since then, Egypt has witnessed an unprecedented surge of private universities, most of which use English as their medium for instruction, adopt foreign curricula and have partnerships with universities in Europe, the United States, and recently Asia.

***2.2.3.2 Private and international universities.*** By the beginning of the 1996-97 academic year, "four private universities had been established: the Sixth of October University, Misr University for Science and Technology (MUST), Misr International University (MIU) and the October University for Modern Sciences and Arts (MSA)"(Cook, 1999, p. 99).The establishment of these universities was cheered by investors and educators, who saw it as a good solution for the complex educational problems, but it also raised neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism concerns because these universities were

affiliated with American and British universities and the admission criteria included an English language exam (Cook, 1999, p. 100). These concerns were to become more alarming with the establishment of foreign universities, and more significant if we take into consideration that Egyptians had already been discontent with the national system of education on the grounds that it was too westernized. According to Cook (1999), "a heavy majority [of Egyptians] considered the national system of education as too Westernized, needing more of an Islamic texture in both university subject matter and daily life" (p. 244). So, one can imagine the reactions that private *foreign* universities created.

### 2.3 The Immediate Context: The American University in Cairo

The American University in Cairo (AUC) is a liberal arts institution that was founded in 1919 by a group of American Dutch Reformed Church officers. It "operates within the framework of the 1975 protocol with the Egyptian government, which in turn is based on the 1962 Cultural Relations Agreement between the Egyptian and the U.S. governments" (AUCa, 2011). AUC is an independent, not-for-profit, equal-opportunity institution accredited in both Egypt and the United States. It offers 34 undergraduate and 41 graduate programs to almost 7,000 students (AUCc, 2016). The language of instruction at AUC is English, but all new students who have not passed the *Thanaweya Amma* [Egyptian high school diploma] Arabic exam or its equivalent have to sit for an Arabic placement test to determine if they "may be required" to take either one or both of the following SA courses: Elementary Arabic and Intermediate Arabic (AUCd).

Although AUC's five learning outcomes, listed on its website, do not explicitly or specifically mention identity, two of them do touch upon the concept. These are cultural competence and effective citizenship:

> **Cultural Competence**
> AUC graduates will have an understanding and appreciation of Egyptian and Arab culture and heritage, as well as an understanding of international interdependence, cultural diversity, and consideration for values and traditions that may differ from their own. In addition, AUC graduates will have an aesthetic awareness of the various modes of human artistic expression and will be able to collaborate effectively in a multicultural context.
> **Effective Citizenship**
> AUC graduates value service to their local community and to broader causes at the national and international level. (AUCe, 2017)

This implied reference to students' cultural identity is more obvious in two of the four Core Curriculum's goals and objectives. The Core Curriculum consists of three parts, the Freshman Level, the Secondary Level, and the Capstone Level, which have been designed to ensure that AUC students:

- Acquire basic language and literacy skills, such as reading, writing and speaking English fluently; possess a basic competence in Arabic; […].
- Acquire familiarity with the modern Arab world and its historical and literary heritage. (AUCf).

In the Secondary Level of the Core Curriculum, for example, students are required to select two courses from the Arab World Studies category, and one from the Humanities and Social Sciences category. The first category includes a wide variety of courses related to Arab, and Egyptian society, literature, and history, such as Arab Society, Introduction to Classical Arabic Literature, Survey of Arab History, Colloquial and Folk Literature, Non-Muslim Communities in the

Muslim World, and Social Problems of the Middle East. The second category includes several courses related to Islamic thought and history, such as Introduction to Sufism, Islamic Philosophy, and Introduction to the Study of Islam (AUCg, 2017).

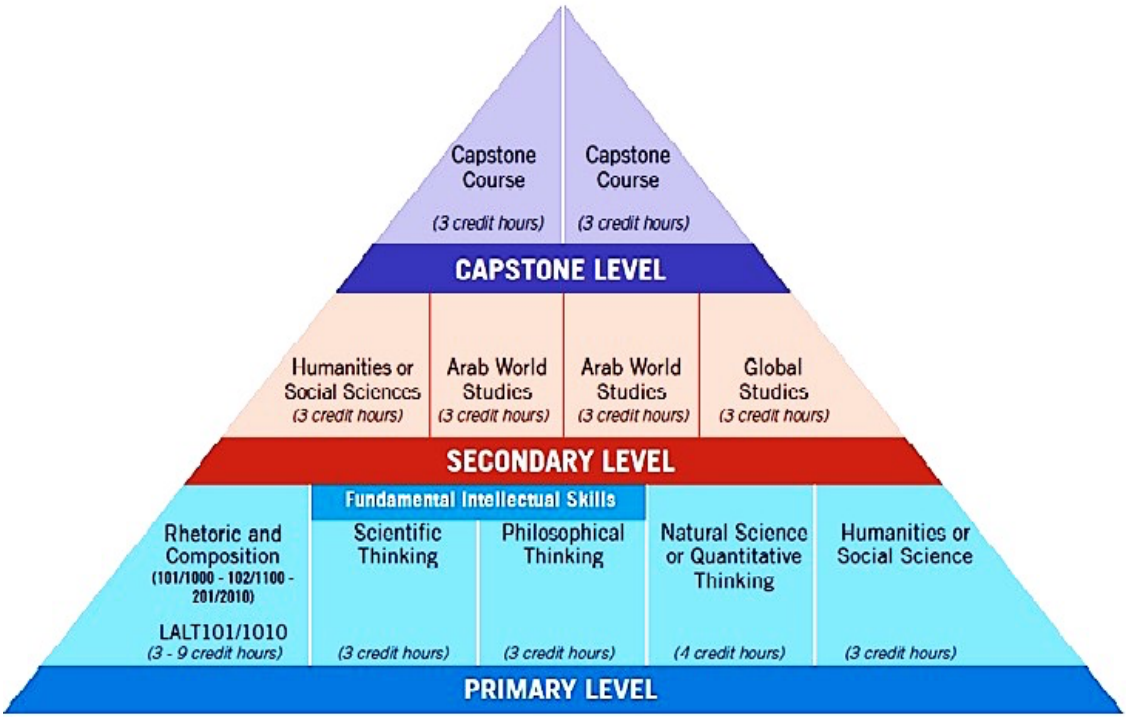


*Figure 1: Core curriculum (2007-2013) (AUCh, 2017)*

Although AUC provides several academic-merit and other scholarships to attract excellent students who would otherwise not be able to attend AUC, it is still an elite university that is not affordable to most Egyptians; tuition fees per semester for the academic year 2016-2017 for new undergraduate Egyptian students were very high, particularly after the devaluation of the Egyptian Pound. Table 3 illustrates tuition fees for newly-admitted Egyptian undergraduate students for the Academic Year 2016-2017:

*Table 3*

Tuition Fees per Semester for the Academic Year 2016-2017 for New Undergraduate Egyptian Students (AUCi, 2016)

| Category of Students | Number of Credits | Egyptian Students | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | USD Portion | Egyptian Portion |
| New students admitted in academic year 2016/2017 | 12 | 4,020 | 31,476 |
| | 15 | 5,025 | 39,345 |
| | 18 | 6,030 | 47,214 |

AUC's very geographical location makes it come across as an inaccessible university. Its new 260-acre campus which started operating in September 2008 is located in the high-class suburb of New Cairo in the middle of luxurious gated compounds and malls, unlike its old campus that was located in the heart of Cairo on Tahrir Square.

The AUC community is very different from other universities in Egypt, both public and private. First, it is quite diverse; "[w]ith a community of students and faculty members representing more than 60 countries, AUC is a crossroads for the world's cultures and a vibrant forum for reasoned argument, spirited debate and understanding across cultures" (AUCa, 2011). This diversity is showcased and celebrated in a myriad of forms such as AUC's community and international days. AUC also offers an unmatched variety of extra-curricular activities in the form of students' clubs, sports activities, and public lectures and events. There are 49 undergraduate and graduate students' organizations at AUC that cover a wide range of interests: academic, cultural and special interest, community service, conferences and student government (AUCj, 2016).

AUC is often stereotyped in the Egyptian society as a university for “rich spoiled kids” who lead a morally-loose lifestyle with little room for Egyptian values and traditions. Those stereotypes about AUCians are reinforced by Egyptian media. A comic TV series called *Heba regl el-ghorab*, for instance, depicts an AUC graduate as an irresponsible, snobbish young woman who does not mind presenting a colleague’s work as her own, who has sexual relationships outside wedlock, and whose only qualifications are her friendship with the company manager, stylish appearance (blond hair and fashionable attire) and fluent English (Zayed & Bedeir, 2014). Another movie *se’eedy felgam’aa elamrikiyya* [An Upper Egyptian at the American University] shows Khalaf Eldahshouri Khalaf, a young Egyptian man from a village in *Se’eed* [Upper Egypt] who gets a scholarship to study at AUC, and who faces hilarious situations as he attempts to fit in the AUC community (Al-Adl & Hamed, 1998). Khalaf ’s dress code, Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA) accent, and behaviour are portrayed in a humoristic manner as very different from the average AUC student who dresses fashionably and speaks in a Cairene ECA accent. The movie, despite its message of pride in Egyptian culture and despite showing a more confident Khalaf, proud of his identity, does build part of its story on stereotypes about AUC students.

# Chapter 3: Literature Review

There has been a noticeable surge in the number of identity-related studies in the last decade; to name but a few, in Europe (Bertram-Troost, de Roos, & Miedema, 2009; Henry & Goddard, 2015; Jaspal & Coyle, 2010); North America (Peek, 2005; Stoppa, 2016); Asia (Choi, 2004; Gu, 2010; Gao, Jia, & Zhu, 2015; Turnbull, 2017; Vasilopoulos, 2015; Zacharias, 2012); the Gulf region (Hasanen, Al-kandari, & Al-sharoufi, 2014; Belhiah & Elhami, 2015; Hopkyns, 2015;), and Egypt (Al-bakri & Abdel-Fattah, 2006; Ramadan, 2006; Bassiouney, 2014). This interest is, at least partially, due to globalization's effects on different groups, be they ethnic, religious, linguistic or otherwise, which feel threatened by the winds of globalization. It is thus difficult to talk about identity construction without taking into consideration the general globalization context in which it takes place.

This chapter is divided into three major sections that review the literature on identity and globalization respectively. The first one highlights some of the most important milestones in the development of the study of identity and reviews key identity theories that have informed my understanding of identity. It then defines the three identity components that this study investigates; national, religious and linguistic. The second part discusses globalization as it relates to identity and education, and the hegemony/ heterogeneity debate surrounding it both internationally, regionally and locally. It then synthesizes the findings of recent research on foreign/international education and students' identity formation in Egypt and other Arab and Muslim countries, that are to a great extent similar to the socio-cultural Egyptian context. This synthesis revealed a scarcity in empirical studies that examined the identity construction of foreign-university students in Egypt, and a virtual absence of research, in Egypt and

other countries, that examines all three identities (national, religious, linguistic) simultaneously; hence the focus of this study that aimed to examine these three identity components among Egyptian AUC students. The study attempted to answer the following research question:

> How do freshman Egyptian AUC students construct and negotiate their national, religious, and linguistic identities in the context of this foreign higher-education institution?

### 3.1 Identity

Interest in the study of identity was initially limited to psychology and then developed in sociology (Côte & Levine, 2002; Ameli, 2002), before it evolved into a complex multidisciplinary subject (Nabeth, 2009). In fact, "psychologists and sociologists have often failed to engage with each other's concerns and insights and have reproduced the much criticised individual-society dichotomy (Henriques et al., 1984) or, in sociology, the much debated agency- structure duality" (Rattansi & Phoenix, 2009, p. 98). Hence the absence of a single agreed-upon conception of identity and identity formation, and the difference in the degree of focus on either the individual (psychology) or society (sociology). Defining identity is no easy matter, but this, argues Suleiman (1997), should not "deter us from delving into those questions of collective affiliation which constitute the scope of identity, […] A degree of conceptual vagueness is therefore inevitable, but not so crippling as to deny us the possibility of an informed treatment of identity-related subjects"(as cited in Suleiman, 2003, p. 5). The next three sub-sections summarize and explain four identity formation theories, namely Erickson's Psychosocial Stage Theory, Marcia's Identity Status Paradigm, Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, and Stryker & Burke's "Identity Theory".

**3.1.1 Erikson's Psychosocial Stage Theory.** Psychoanalyst Erik Erikson is one of the most prominent identity theorists whose Psychosocial Stage Theory, notions of ego identity, and identity crisis form the root of much subsequent research on identity that eventually yielded a multidimensional and comprehensive theory of identity formation (Côtè & Levine, 2002, p.14). Although many of Freud's writings revolved around identification and identity-related processes, they were limited to identity formation in childhood. It was Erikson (1950) who proposed that identity formation is "the main task of adolescence". He argued that what separates childhood from adolescence and adulthood is "the presence of self-selected identity elements"; in other words, the end of the childhood phase is marked by identity consolidation (as cited in Rattansi & Phoenix 2009, p. 101).

Erikson's identity concept moved away from the theoretical divide between the intrapsychic and environmental foci of psychology and sociology respectively (Shwartz, 2009, p. 8). Erikson's (1968) definition of ego identity referred to both psychological and social elements; he defined ego as "the awareness of … self-sameness and continuity … [and] the style of one's individuality [which] coincides with the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others in the immediate community" (as cited in Shwartz, 2009, p. 8). In fact, Erikson believed that identity plays an important role "in keeping the internal [psychological] and external [social] worlds aligned to each other"(as cited in Rattansi & Phoenix, 2009, p. 101).

Erikson (1968) represented identity on a bipolar dimension with the "ego syntonic pole of identity synthesis" on one end and "the ego dystonic pole of identity confusion" on the other. He contended that at any point in an individual's life, s/he can be positioned at some point between the identity

synthesis and confusion poles. Identity synthesis refers to the individual's successful reworking of both his/her childhood and present identifications of self into a broader set of self-determined and self-identified ideals. Identity confusion, on the contrary, represents the inability to develop such set of ideals necessary for developing an adult identity. Identity confusion is also represented on a double-poled axis with ‘mild’ and `aggravated’ confusion as its ends. Therefore, for an individual to function in a healthy way and to have a sense of "a present with an anticipated future" s/he should be ideally placed near the mid-point of this identity axis slightly towards the identity-synthesis pole (as cited in Schwartz, 2009, pp. 9-10). Erikson's concept of identity is one of the most extensive and multidimensional ones as it covers diverse dimensions of identity, be they internal such as moral and cognitive dimensions or external sociocultural ones. His theory also comprises "all levels of self, from the most intrapsychic ego conflicts to the individual’s embeddedness in a cultural and historical context" (as cited in Schwarz, 2009, p. 11).

The problem with his identity theory, however, as admitted by Erikson (1950) himself, is that his writings, though rich in clinical and metaphorical description, lack theoretical precision and detail: “at times, the reader will find me painting contexts and backgrounds where he would rather have me point to facts and concepts” (as cited in Schwartz, 2009, p. 11). In fact, Erikson's theory was "eloquent and artistic" but difficult to lend itself to deriving operational definitions from it (Côté, 1984). Therefore, many attempted to derive operational definitions from Erikson's identity theory, but it was Marcia (1966, 1980) who developed the first and most significant neo-Eriksonian identity model (Schwartz, 2009, p. 11).

**3.1.2 James Marcia's Identity Status Paradigm.** Building upon Erikson's theory, mainly his exploration and commitment dimensions, Marcia (1966, 1980, 1988, 1993a), developed the identity status paradigm that particularly focuses on personal identity (as cited in Schwartz, 2009, p. 11). Before delving further into the core of Marcia's paradigm, it is necessary to explain those two dimensions. Exploration is a "problem-solving behavior aimed at eliciting information about oneself or one's environment in order to make a decision about an important life choice" (Grotevant 1987) whereas commitment "represents the adherence to a specific set of goals, values, and beliefs (Marcia, 1988)" (as cited in Schwartz, 2009, p. 12-13). During the exploration stage, one explores a number of alternative identities, and then chooses and commits to one or more of them (commitment stage). This commitment provides one with a sense of fidelity, or purpose and continuity (Marcia, 1980) which could ease the sense of disorientation and uncertainty that are characteristic of identity confusion (Erikson, 1964) (as cited in Schwartz, 2009, p. 11).

Marcia (1966) divided exploration and commitment into high and low levels and derived four identity statuses from them (Schwartz, 2009, p. 11), namely "identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, and identity achievement" (Schwartz, 2009, p. 11; Côté & Levine, 2002, p. 18). Schwartz (2009) explained these statuses as follows:

> Identity achievement symbolizes a commitment enacted following a period of exploration […] Identity moratorium is the state of active exploration in the relative absence of commitment […] Identity foreclosure is the state of having made commitments to a set of goals, values, and beliefs in the relative absence of prior exploration […] Identity diffusion is the apathetic state that represents the relative lack of both exploration and commitment. (pp. 12-13)

It is important to note that the above-stated statuses "are assumed to describe individuals both at the overall personality level and within any number of content areas known as domains (Grotevant, 1993; Waterman, 1985). It is assumed that identity may operate differently across domains and differently within individual domains than at the overall level (Grotevant, 1993)" (Schwartz, 2009, p. 13).

Based on Eriksonian theory, Marcia (1994) argued that the highest level in the identity development process is the achievement of an individual identity that is stable and secure from the external-world effects (as cited in Rattansi & Phoenix 2009, p. 101). This individual/society dichotomy, however, has been criticized for its inability to account for the complexity and dynamicity of identity formation in diverse social contexts. Additionally, the idea that identity is stable and coherent has been increasingly questioned by identity theorists and researchers, even by supporters of "the Erikson inspired ego identity approach" (Rattansi & Phoenix 2009, p. 101). Côté & Levine (1988) and Van Hoof (1999) have criticized Marcia's (1993a, 1994, 1995) identity status model on the grounds that it understated the concept of personal identity that Erikson presented and did not include ego and social identity. Some of the weaknesses they identified in the identity status model "include cross-cultural validity, the failure of the four statuses to differentially relate to comparison variables, and the use of discrete status categories to represent identity" (as cited in Schwartz, 2009, pp. 19-20).

Van Hoof (1999) and Côté and Levine (1988) urged for both extending and expanding neo-Eriksonian identity theory beyond the limitations of Marcia's (1993a, 1994, 1995) identity status model. Consequently, since 1987 several substitute identity models have emerged in an attempt to make

> neo-Eriksonian theory more faithful to Erikson's original writings (e.g., Adams, 1997; Côté & Levine, 1987; Grotevant, 1987, 1992; Meeus et al., 1999). Thus, [...] extension models have been offered by Berzonsky (1989), Grotevant (1987), [and] extensions by Kerpelman, Pittman, &Lamke, 1997a, 1997b), and Waterman (1990), whereas expansion models have been offered by Kurtines (1999), Adams (Adams & Marshall, 1996), and Côté (1996b, 1997). (Schwartz, 2009, p. 20)

This extension and expansion led to the inclusion of more concepts from Erikson's original writings, "such as consideration of individual differences; the search for, discovery, and utilization of innate potentials; critical problem solving skills; social responsibility; integrity of character; social and cultural contexts; and all three levels of identity introduced by Erikson" (Schwartz, 2009, p. 48).

The extension models are characterised by their difference from one another; while the expansion models overlap to a great extent. For example, among those who extended Erikson's theory, Grotevant (1987) embarked on an exhaustive analysis of the identity exploration process; Berzonsky (1989) looked at individual differences in problem solving and decision making; and Waterman (1990) added a new dimension "self-discovery" to the identity status model.

The expansion models, on the contrary, cannot be described separately from one another because all of them focus on the interaction between social and personal identity, despite their difference in the degree of focus on each of these identities. Kurtines (1999) for example focused more on personal identity issues such as the social value of responsibility and critical thinking; Adams (Adams & Marshall, 1996), however, gave personal and social identity equal value and attention; Côté (1996b, 1997), on the other hand, mainly focused on social identity and treated personal identity as only a tool of negotiating social resources (as cited in Schwartz, 2009, pp. 21-22).

It is beyond the scope of this study to present all expansion and extension theories. Instead, it will only focus on theories that are relevant to this study. These theories are Henry Tajfel's Social Identity Theory and Stryker & Burke's Identity Theory that focus on group-based and role-based identities respectively.

**3.1.3. Social Identity Theory**. Social Identity Theory (SIT) originated in the works of Henri Tajfel and was developed in collaboration with John Turner in the seventies and early eighties (Hogg et al., 1995). It is a social psychological theory that stresses that identity is socially constructed, and focuses on the structure and function of identity in relation to an individual's group membership (Hogg et al., 1995). Tajfel (1978) defined social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (as cited in Joseph, 2004, p. 76). This theory stresses both the cognitive and emotional aspects of social identity formation. The cognitive aspect being "social categorization", the knowledge that the individual is a member in a social category or group (be it a nationality, a political affiliation, or a sports team), and "intergroup comparison," identification with other group members whom the individual perceives as sharing similar social identities, beliefs, and attitudes as his/hers, and the emotional aspect being "feelings of belonging" to that category or group. An individual, thus, identifies him/her self with a group that s/he perceives him/her self to be a member of so as to differentiate between his/her group "ingroup" and "outgroups" (Korostelina, 2007). People's memberships in various groups are represented in their minds as social identities that both describe and prescribe "what one should think and feel, and how one should behave" (Hogg

et al., 1995, p. 260). These social identities, however, are not of equal importance in the individual's self-concept (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 259).

Tajfel's (1978) conception of social identity was a significant development in identity theory at that time due to the following positions implicit within it:

- that social identity pertains to an individual rather than to a social group;
- that it is a matter of self-concept, rather than of social categories into which one simply falls;
- that the fact of membership is the essential thing, rather than anything having to do with the nature of the group itself;
- that an individual's own knowledge of the membership, and the particular value they attach to it-completely 'subjective' factors-are what count;
- that emotional significance is not the same trivial side effect of the identity belonging but an integral part of it. (Joseph, 2004, p. 76)

**3.1.4 "Identity Theory"[2].** Another very relevant theory for my study is Identity Theory (IT), which began in the discipline of sociology and has roots in both symbolic interactionism and perceptual control theory (Burke & Stets, 2009). Although this theory came to my attention only at a late stage of my data analysis, it soon became fundamental to my understanding of identity formation as it validated my own interpretations of the participants' processes of identity construction and negotiation.

IT focuses on "the structure and function of people's identity as related to the behavioral roles they play in society" and views the self "as a multifaceted social construct that emerges from people's roles in society" (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 256). Stryker (1968, 1980) contended that "we have distinct components of

[2]This theory is called "Identity Theory".

self, called role identities, for each of the role positions in society that we occupy […]. For example, a person's role identities may include the fact that she is a mother, a wife, a daughter, a social worker, and a blood donor" (Hogg et al.,1995, p. 256). These role identities are "self-conceptions, self- referent cognitions, or self-definitions that people apply to themselves as a consequence of the structural role positions they occupy, and through a process of labelling or self- definition as a member of a particular social category (Burke, 1980; Thoits, 1991)" (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 256). Role identities have "counterroles"; for instance, father versus daughter or teacher versus student (Burke & Stets, 2009).

In its most recent form, IT has developed into three slightly different approaches, as presented below; the interactional approach (McCall and Simmons), the structural approach (Stryker),and the cognitive approach (Burke).The first approach focuses "on how identities are maintained in face-to-face interaction"; the second approach focuses "on how the social structure influences one's identity and behavior"; whereas the cognitive approach "emphasizes the internal dynamics within the self that influence behavior" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 38).

***3.1.4.1 The interactional emphasis***. McCall and Simmons (1978) defined a role identity as one's "imaginative view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of a social position" (as cited in Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 39).They argued that a role identity has both a conventional and an idiosyncratic dimension; the conventional dimension refers to the cultural expectations associated with the social positions occupied by individuals, while the idiosyncratic dimension includes the individuals' interpretations of those roles (Burke & Stets, 2009).

McCall and Simmons highlighted the idiosyncratic dimension of role identities and the importance of negotiation in interacting with others (Stets, 2006; Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 42).They contended that in a given interaction between individuals (actors in a situation), each actor has a view of his/her identity in relation to the other actors' identities (counterroles), and each actor needs to endorse a behaviour that interrelates with the other actors, which requires coordination between all actors. So, when conflict emerges, they must negotiate and compromise in order for each actor's behaviour to be supported and for the interaction to progress smoothly (Burke & Stets, 2009).

McCall and Simmons believed that the multiple role identities that an individual occupies are organized into a prominence hierarchy and a salience hierarchy within the self. The position of an identity on the prominence hierarchy depends on three factors; support from self or others for the claimed identity in a given situation, the degree of commitment to that role identity, and the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards individuals obtain from that identity, whereby extrinsic rewards refer to resources such as money, favours, and prestige that individuals obtain for an identity that they claim, and intrinsic rewards refer to the gratifications that individuals experience, internally, for the performance of a role (Burke & Stets, 2009). While the prominence hierarchy reflects the ideal self, the salience hierarchy reflects the situational self; "the self that responds to the expectations of the situation rather than the desires of the self. It is the identity that is perceived as most advantageous to adopt in a situation in terms of getting support". The salience of an identity is influenced by several factors in a given situation; "*prominence, support, rewards*, and the *perceived opportunity structure*" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 41).

***3.1.4.2 The structural emphasis***. The second emphasis within IT is Stryker's structural emphasis, named so because of its focus on the effect of social structure on identity. Similarly to McCall and Simmons, Stryker's key concept is a role identity. Stryker, as well, argued that individuals have multiple identities organized into a hierarchy within the self. Yet, he focused neither on the idiosyncratic aspect of identities nor on their negotiation in interaction; instead he has addressed the normative, conventional aspect of role identities, and is more interested in "how the social structure affects the self and one's identity and, in turn, behavior" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 45).

Stryker (1980) believed that role identities are organized into a salience hierarchy in which a more salient identity is more likely to be activated in various settings, and consequently "the behaviors associated with that identity that are in accord with the role expectations will be more likely to be enacted." Thus, the salience hierarchy can predict an actor's behaviour in a given situation (Burke & Stets 2009, p. 46). However, Stryker's salience hierarchy has the same role as prominence hierarchy for McCall and Simmons in that it predicts long-run instead of short-run behaviours (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Stryker (1980) maintained that the salience of an identity is influenced by the degree of commitment one has to the identity. Commitment to an identity is linked to the costs associated with *not playing* (instead of MacCall & Simmons' playing) out the role associated with that identity; accordingly, the higher the cost for giving up an identity, the higher the commitment to it. The costs are measured along two elements; the number (quantitative/interactional) of ties to others in one's social networks based on identity and the strength (qualitative/affective) of those ties (as cited in Burke & Stets, 2009).

#### *3.1.4.3 The perceptual control emphasis/Identity control theory*

The only extension/expansion model that significantly diverts from Erikson's conceptions is Peter Burke's Identity Control theory (Schwartz, 2009, p. 30) that focuses on the internal dynamics of identity (Burke & Stets, 2009). According to Burke (1980):

> Essentially, tied to each identity is a set of meanings that persons attribute to themselves when they are playing out or claim an identity. The meanings associated with the identity come to be known to the person through interaction with others in the situation in which others respond to the individual as if the person had these set of meanings. Thus, self-meanings develop from the reaction of others; and over time, a person responds to him or her self in the same way that others respond to the person, such that self-meanings become significant or shared by all. (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 49)

Burke further argued that the meanings that an individual has for his/her identities affect his/her behaviour; thus, identifying the meanings of an individual's identity can predict the meanings of that individual's behaviour (Burke & Stets, 2009). He suggested a "cybernetic model" of the identity process whereby an identity has four components; an input, an identity standard, a comparator, and an output that operate in the following manner:

> Since an identity is a set of meanings attached to the self, this set of meanings serves as a standard or reference for a person. When an identity is activated in a situation, a feedback loop is established. This loop has four components: (1)the identity standard (the self-meanings of an identity), (2) perceptual input of self-relevant meanings from the situation including how one sees oneself and the meaningful feedback that the self obtains from others (reflected appraisals), (3) a process that compares the perceptual input with the identity standard (the comparator), and (4) output to the environment (meaningful behaviour) that is a function of the comparison (difference) of perceptions of self-meanings from the situation with actual self-meanings held in the

> identity standard. The system works by modifying outputs (behaviour) to the social situation in attempts to change the input to match the internal standard. The system works by modifying outputs (behaviour) to the social situation in attempts to change the input to match the internal standard. (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 50)

When the perceived meanings of self-in-situation match the self-meanings in the identity standard, the individual's identity is verified. However, if those meanings do not match, the individual feels distress and alters his/her behaviour to counteract the situational meanings in order to accomplish identity verification (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Burke's view of commitment is a little bit different from Stryker's. For Burke, "commitment to an identity is the sum total of the pressure to keep perceptions of the self-in-situation meanings in line with the self-meanings held in the identity standard" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 51). An individual is more committed to an identity when s/he tries very hard to keep the perceived self-in-situation meaning matched to the meaning held in the identity standard. Commitment thus acts as a moderator between identity and behaviour making the link between them either stronger in the case of high commitment or weaker in the case of low commitment (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Identities in Burke's perceptual emphasis model are also arranged hierarchically, but instead of a salience or prominence hierarchy, they are arranged in a control system of identities. The identities at a higher level on the control system are general ones whose standards are related to ideals, beliefs, and values; whereas the lower level identities have goals that are more concrete and situated (Burke & Stets, 2009). The outputs of higher-level identities "provide the standards for identities that are at lower levels in the control system" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 135). In this system, when two or more individual's identities are activated (attempting to get verification) in a

situation, the ones with a higher prominence or higher commitment get verified first. However, despite the existence of multiple identities, the behavioural output is one because there is only one person holding those identities. This means that the individual's behaviour "must "satisfy" several individual identities simultaneously by altering the situation in ways that change all of the self-relevant meanings perceived by all of the different identities" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 134). For all activated identities to be verified successfully, their meanings cannot be in opposition; they should either share the same meanings or be totally unrelated. When their standards' meanings are in opposition, the system faces an impossible situation in which one or more identity standards cannot be verified. In this case, the identity standards shift and individuals re-identify themselves to eradicate the conflict (Burke & Stets, 2009). The same process applies when the different meanings are held by different individuals interacting together in a social setting; the meanings held by these individuals "cannot be in disagreement without serious problems resulting either in identities changing or in people leaving the situation" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 154).

According to IT, identities are constantly but slowly changing as they resist change through the process of verification (Burke & Stets, 2009). Burke (2006a) has posited four cases in which identities undergo systematic change:

> persistent problems with the verification of a particular identity, multiple identities activated together whose verifications require opposing meanings to be manifest in the behavior of the individual, situational exigencies that result in our behavior having different meanings than those embedded in our identity standard, and role-taking, which allows us reflexively to change our identity standard to create mutual verification contexts. (as cited in Burke

& Stets, 2009, p. 186)

According to Burke's control model described earlier, the individual has agency as reflected in his/her behaviour that changes the situation in order to match the perceived situational meanings with the meanings held in the identity standard (Stryker & Burke, 2000). The output behaviour "is the action of the person acting as an agent for the identity that has been activated" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 105). All "[i]dentities use the agency of persons to achieve and maintain the levels, flows, and transformations of actual and potential resources-that is, signs and symbols-in the situation to achieve the goals set in the identity standards" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 108).

While this study draws upon Burke's Cybernetic Model because it provides a precise description of the cognitive processes that accompany identity construction and negotiation, it does not reject the other two variations of IT. In fact, the three variations of IT- interactional, structural and cognitive - complement each other. The interactional approach with its notion of identity prominence and salience and the distinction it makes between ideal and situational selves is important in determining the students' prominent and salient identities and in understanding the reason behind that hierarchy. Similarly, the structural approach is important because though my focus is mainly on the processes of identity construction and negotiation of individual students and in the meanings they make out of them, rather than on the effect of the social structures on these processes, I do not reject the effects of social structures altogether.

***3.1.4.5 Types of identities: Role, social, person***. A role identity as mentioned earlier "is the meaning that actors attach to themselves while enacting a role" (Stets, 2006, p. 203). This meaning is derived from both the

individual's culture and his/her understanding of what the role means. Hence, the meaning has a normative or shared component and a non-shared or idiosyncratic component that requires negotiation in interaction, according to McCall and Simmons (Stets, 2006, p. 204). Besides role identities, social actors have social and person identities. Social identities refer to the meanings they attach to themselves as members of particular social groups or categories such as belonging to a certain gender, nation, and being a member in a political party. On the other hand, person identities refer to the meanings that an individual attaches to his/her self and that distinguish the individual from others. These meanings "include one's unique values and goals along dimensions such as how much control a person desires-the control identity (Stets and Burke 1994)-and how the person sees himself or herself along the moral dimension-the moral identity (Stets and Carter 2006)" (Burke, 2004).

Person identities tend to be very high on the salience and commitment hierarchies; therefore, unlike role and social identities, they operate across various roles and situations and are always on display. This, however, is not the case in all societies; in less open societies where people do not have a lot of choice over their roles and groups, when one's person identity cannot be verified because its meanings are incongruent with one's role or social identity meanings, "the person identity standards will undergo dynamic adjustment over time so that they come to match the existing meanings of the role or group" (Burke, 2004, p. 11). In other words, when people have the choice as to which roles to perform or which groups to join, they choose roles and groups that allow them to verify their person identity, but in the absence of this choice, "as when one is born into a particular family structure, goes to school, or is

drafted into the army," their person identities will move towards the meanings provided in those roles and groups (Burke, 2004, p. 11).

Role, social, and person identities do not operate separately in situations, for roles exist within groups, and those roles are played out differently by different persons; for instance, "the role of parent is within the larger group of the family, and some individuals are more dominant than others in the role of parent" (Stets, 2006, p. 204).

**3.1.5 Identity construction and negotiation**. It is difficult to define "identity construction" and "identity negotiation" separately because of their intertwined relationship. Identity construction "has been hypothesized to involve 'changes in identity that can be characterized as *progressive developmental shifts*'" (Waterman, 1982 as cited in Klimstra et al., 2010, p. 150). On the other hand, "Identity negotiation" has been defined by Swann (2005) as "the processes through which perceivers and targets come to agreements regarding the identities that targets are to assume in [a given social] interaction" (p. 69).

When people interact with each other, they usually have goals that they wish to achieve, so they attempt "to establish mutual identities" that allow them to achieve those goals. This triggers a negotiation process whose outcome, if successful, leads to an agreement about the identities that they should assume during that interaction. As a result of this agreement, "the interaction proceeds smoothly until the participants have achieved their goals or one partner decides not to honor the identity that he or she has negotiated" (Swann, 1987, p. 1048). In the case, of a perceived identity threat, individuals use identity negotiation strategies to verify their self-perceptions (Deaux & Ethier, 1998, as cited in Chapman, Eccles, & Malanchuk, 2005, pp. 125-126). These self-verification strategies can be interpersonal or intrapsychic explained Swann (1987):

> Some strategies of self-verification are interpersonal, involving people's efforts to bring others to see them as they see themselves. Other strategies are intrapsychic, involving processes through which people see more self-confirmatory evidence than actually exists. Orthogonal to this distinction, some strategies are relatively automatic and effortless and others are conscious and effortful. (p. 1047)

This ongoing negotiation that is characteristic of social interaction between individuals (re)constructs their identities. In turn, these (re)constructed identities would lead to more identity negotiation in order for them to be verified. Identity construction is thus a life project.

**3.1.6 Implications for this study.** Unlike early research that viewed identity as stable and as culturally and socially predetermined, I adopt a non-essentialist postmodern position that views identity as a dynamic process, “an ongoing lifelong project in which individuals constantly attempt to maintain a sense of balance, what Giddens (1991) called ‘ontological security’, that is the possession of ‘“answers” to fundamental questions which all human life in some way addresses’"(as cited in Block, 2006, p. 36). Thus, identity is no longer seen as given from birth but rather as the result of free individual choice. An individual’s agency enables him/her to choose whether to acquire or reject a social identity (Korostelina, 2007, p. 81). An individual, as conceived by Bourdieu, is “an active human agent who is defined by the system but, crucially, not merely its passive object. The agent engages in exchanges of symbolic power with other agents, each of whose habitus is linked to the rest in the shared field" (Joseph, 2004, p. 74).

Yet, while individuals are not simply born to predetermined identities dictated by their social environments, and while they are quite powerful agents who have choice, this choice can be restricted by social structures. Identities

are not created equal in all societies and societies do not always allow their members to assume agency; a society can tolerate individual agency for one identity but not the other. Mathews (2000) contended that agency is overemphasized; he argued that “the cultural supermarket” does not allow everyone to assume any “self-identity” they wish to. He further explained that social structures, be they governmental institutions, educational institutions or peers, limit “the amount and scope of choice available to individuals”. For instance, some social structures do not provide a large array of identity choices to start with, such as societies that prescribe strict traditional gender roles (as cited in Block, 2006, p. 36).

Contrary to the traditional perspective for which "culture is assumed to be *in* individuals but not *of* them [. . . and] individuals are assumed to play no role in defining cultural norms, only reflecting them"(Hall, 2002, p. 32), this study looks at identity from a sociocultural perspective in which "identity is not seen as singular and unitary, but rather as socially constituted, a reflexive product of the social, historical and political contexts of an individual's lived experiences"(Hall, 2002, p. 32). Although the social identities of people are shaped by their communities, they "as individual agents" do take part in shaping these identities; "[h]owever, unlike the more traditional view, which views agency as an inherent motivation of individuals, a sociocultural perspective views it as the 'socioculturally mediated capacity to act' (Ahearn, 2001: 112)" (as cited in Hall, 2002, p. 35)

The vision of identity that this paper adopts is one in which identity, as Habermas (1992) argued, "is not something pregiven, but also, and simultaneously, our own project" (as cited in Larrain, 1994, p. 165). A view in which one is not born with a set identity, for identity “is built up and changes

throughout a person's lifetime.” A person “is not himself from the outset; nor does he just ‘grow aware’ of what he is; he *becomes* what he is. He doesn't merely ‘grow aware’ of his identity; he acquires it step by step” (Maalouf, 2000, pp. 20-21).

Hall (1996) defined cultural identity as

> a matter of “becoming” as well as of “being”. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous “play” of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere “recovery” of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (as cited in Larrain, 1994, p. 162)

**3.1.7 National, religious and linguistic identities.** Having defined identity and outlined the theories that inform this study, I now move to defining the three identities under investigation: religious, national and linguistic.

***3.1.7.1 Religious identity.*** There is no single definition of religion in sociology. Giddens (1989) defines religion as “a belief in a Supreme Being, who commands us to behave in a moral fashion on this earth, and promises an afterlife to come” (as cited in Ameli, 2002, p. 27). Geertz (1973) defined it as "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence" (as cited in Ameli, 2002, p. 27). Berger (1969) defined religion as people's ability to go beyond their "biological nature" and to construct "objective, morally binding, all embracing universals of meaning” (as cited in Ameli, 2002,

p. 28). Durkheim (1976), however, related religion to social solidarity rather than spiritual beliefs. He believed that religions "involve regular ceremonial and ritual activities, in which a group of believers meet together as a collectivity" (as cited in Ameli, 2002, p. 27).

For many individuals, religion is an important component of their personal and social identities as it plays a significant role in organizing their hierarchy of identities (Peek, 2005, p. 219), helps them integrate those other identities within their selves and their societies (Pecchenino, 2009, p. 31), provides context to their lives (Mayo Clinic, 2006 as cited in Pecchenino 2009, p. 31), "suppl[ies] the plot for the stories of [their] lives, singly and collectively, and [is] bound up with [their] deepest beliefs about life, the universe and everything" (Joseph, 2004, p.172). Spiritual identity development is different from other identity components such as role and ethnic identities in its being gradual, more flexible and idiosyncratic, and "less determined by societal labeling of the self" (Kiesling & Sorell, 2009, p. 258).

Unlike Freud who was antagonistic to religion (Kiesling & Sorell, 2009, p. 253), Erikson highly regarded and carefully examined religion and spirituality's impact on ego identity formation, which made him recognize that for some people religion and spirituality

> provided such a profound and comprehensive resolution to individual identity crises that it could become definitive of one's identity across the life span. [He] predicted that ideological exploration and spiritual identity development could become especially salient with adolescent cognitive ripening (Erikson, 1968). Religion could serve as a vehicle for resolving crises bolstering faith via the achievement of ego strengths (Kwilecki, 1999). (Kiesling & Sorell, 2009, p. 257)

Subsequent identity research, however, tended to marginalize spiritual development in comparison to "the cognitive, emotional, or social domain"

(Kiesling & Sorell, 2009, p. 254). Religion has not been given enough attention as an identity category in most identity theories and research on identity. Peek (2005) cited several examples of identity researchers and theorists that did not include religion as an identity category (Cerulo1997) or as an important defining aspect of individuals or groups in society (Frable1997 and Howard 2000) and those that invoke Christian symbolism, but ignore religion as a source of identity (Appiah and Gates 1995:1) (p. 218).

Marcia's inclusion of political and religious orientations in his conception of the ideological identity domains played an important role in encouraging research on spirituality and identity. Thus, following his conceptualization, several studies were conducted to assess individuals' "exploration of and commitment to religious ideology as components of overall adolescent identity status (Marcia, 1993; Markstrom, 1999). However, these studies did not focus specifically on the content or structure of spiritual identity" (Kiesling & Sorell, 2009, p. 255).

A review of the literature on religious identity reveals that "religious identity" is sometimes used interchangeably with "spiritual identity" (For instance Rockenbach, Walker, & Luzader, 2012); in some cases, researchers explained the difference between the two terms but opted for “spirituality” as an umbrella term under which religion falls, for the sake of simplicity, but other times the two terms were sharply distinguished from each other. A further important observation is that the strict distinction between these terms or lack thereof is culturally determined. Religion and spirituality have different meanings in Western cultures but not necessarily so in other cultures. Tummala-Narra (2009) explained that religion in Western cultures is usually "viewed as more

communal in nature, involving traditional and archaic God representations and formality of rules and rituals developed by social institutions, and spirituality is conceptualized as more individualized, referring to more idiosyncratic personal beliefs and a sense of becoming connected to something beyond oneself" (p. 84). In Eastern religions, in contrast, there is no such distinction between an individual spirituality and a collective religion because the tension between the needs of the individual and the larger religious community that exists in individualistic cultures "is mitigated by the interdependent nature of religious communities and individual spiritual beliefs in collectivistic cultures"(Tummala-Narra, 2009, p. 85).

Those who distinguish religion from spirituality tend to associate religion "with the institutional and the sociological (prescribed systems, rituals, and traditions or beliefs), and spirituality becomes associated more with personal, psychological, and individual phenomena" (Kiesling & Sorell, 2009, p. 254). On the other hand, some researchers avoided this differentiation for many reasons. First, for so many individuals, "there is no clear separation between the collective, social, and formal religious practices and their individualistic formal religious participation, the content of collective ideals, and religious practices are deeply intertwined with the experiential and formative components of their self-definition"(Kiesling & Sorell, 2009, p. 254).

Religious identity can take cultural, realized, and mobilized forms. People whose religious identity takes a cultural form perform religious activities without thinking about or understanding their meanings. Those with realized forms of this identity have a basic sense of their religion's values and beliefs and a good understanding of its role in society and the role of faith in facing life's challenges. Whereas People with mobilized forms of religious identity

believe that it is their duty to convert people from other faiths, “nonbelievers and faithless”, to their religion (Korostelina, 2007). To illustrate,

> a woman can wear a scarf as an important symbol of her religious identity without knowing the meaning of this tradition or having wrong interpretations *(cultural form).* She also can understand the deep concept that a woman has to be "sacred and clean"*(realized form).* She can use the scarf to stress her distance from and opposition to other groups *(mobilized form). (*Korostelina, 2007, p. 86)

Religious identities, like other social identities, are not all always voluntarily taken; Rosenberg (1981) pointed out that “scarcely has an infant entered the world than he or she is immediately classified according to race, sex, religion, nationality, and so forth” (as cited in Alwin, Felson, Walker, & Tufis, 2006, p. 534). However, although these identities begin to develop in early childhood, they are formed during adolescence and early adulthood (Alwin et al., 2006). Religious identities are usually formed at home through interaction with one's parents and family members and later through membership in religious groups; however, in post-adolescence, they become increasingly a matter of individual choice (Alwin et al., 2006; Mullikin, 2006) as post-adolescents search for alternative viewpoints to support their beliefs (Mullikin, 2006) and engage in a process of identity exploration in which they question their previous beliefs and choices (Pastorino & Dunham, 1997, as cited in Mullikin, 2006). A considerable number of studies on religious identity development focus on emerging adults (See for example, Lefkowitz, 2005; Bryant & Astin, 2008; Rockenbach, Walker, & Luzader, 2012) and the transition from high school to university as a time of exploring and questioning one’s religious views. A time mainly characterised by “spiritual struggle”

(Bryant & Astin, 2008; Rockenbach et al., 2012) and "shipwrek" (Parks, 2000).

Recent research on identity also points to the significant role played by identity agents, in religious identity formation; particularly parents (Petts, 2015; De Hoon & Van Tubergen, 2014), peers (Sugimura & Shimizu, 2010), and also teachers (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010). Harrell-Levy and Kerpelman (2010) contended that "[w]hen contact with another person is regular and meaningful, the likelihood is increased that interactions with that person will include influential feedback about the adolescent's identity" (pp. 77-78). They further explained that "[c]lassroom contexts contain important social resources, such as differing perspectives among classmates and new ideas introduced by the teacher or assigned readings, that affect adolescents' identity exploration" (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010, p. 79). This seems to be particularly true at college.

> As a setting in which individuals are often asked to consciously reflect on many of life's "bigger questions" and to examine the self and the world-at-large, the college context may constitute an especially salient milieu for understanding developmental experiences and changes in spiritual identity. (Stoppa, 2016, p. 2)

Research on religious/spiritual identity is generally scarce compared to research on other identity components. Moreover, within this small body of research, very few studies were done in Europe, for instance, and most of it has taken place in the United States. This may be reflective of the different role spirituality plays in these societies; in the United States, "[s]pirituality and spiritual identity are important sources of identification and influence in the lives of many emerging adult college students" (Stoppa, 2016, p. 1). However, Only some of these studies included Muslim participants, that ranged between 1% (Bryant & Astin, 2008; Stoppa, 2016) and 2% of the

participants (Lefkowitz, 2005); “Islam has only minimally been integrated into the higher education and developmental theory literature bodies” (Small, 2008, p. 67). In fact, the two most important faith development theories (Fowler, 1981; Parks, 2000) have been criticized for their cultural bias; Fowler, for instance, was criticized for “the overwhelming dominance of Christians and Catholics in [his] original sample and/or the insistence that the theory is universally applicable to all religions” (Small, 2008, p. 40).

In an attempt to rectify this bias, Small (2008) suggested a modified faith theory that acknowledged variations of faith development between Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Three of the several differences between these three monotheist groups, reported by Small (2008), are first, “that Muslim students have a close relationship with God and remain heavily connected to parents and other role models” (Mayhew, 2004, as cited in Small, 2008, p. 68). Second, Bryant (2006) “found the 826 Muslim college students who were in her sample to be highly religiously active, more so than any of the other minority religious groups she examined” (as cited in Small, 2008, p. 67). Third, with reference to Fowler’s faith development stages not being universally applicable, “[d]evout Muslims live their entire existences as a sacrifice to God, as this is the main objective of their spiritual lives. The commitment to this begins at an age long before Fowler’s (1981) Stage 6, as young as childhood” (Small, 2008, p. 85). The current study, therefore, aims to shed more light on Muslim students’ religious identity development.

***3.1.7.2 National identity.*** National identity is based on a combination of elements that set a certain nation apart from other nations. These elements include a sense of shared beliefs, language, history, traditions, and culture among a group of people living within a certain geographical boundary at a

given time. National identity refers to a group's "definition of itself as a group-its conception of its enduring characteristics and basic values; its strengths and weaknesses; its hopes and fears; its reputation and conditions of existence; its institutions and traditions; and its past history, current purposes, and future prospects"(Anderson, 1991, as cited in Korostelina, 2007, p. 182). It is "instilled in individuals" and "internalized in the course of socialization" (Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl & Liebhart, 1999, as cited in Block, 2007, p. 29) "through education, media, and everyday practices" (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 47). Wodak (1999) maintained that:

> We assume "national identity" to imply a complex of similar conceptions and perceptual schemata, of similar emotional dispositions and attitudes, and of similar behavioral conventions, which bearers of this "national identity" share collectively and which they have internalized through socialization (education, politics, the media, sports and everyday practices. (as cited in Bassiouney, 2014, p. 47)

National identity is "*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 1991, as cited in Korostelina, 2007, p. 182). Anthony Smith stressed the "need for community" as a further "sociopsychological" element in the formation of national identity. He contended that the similarities between the people in a certain nation do not constitute the basis of national identity, but it is rather based "on their feelings of strong attachment to the nation and solidarity with other members of their nation" (as cited in Korostelina, 2007, p. 182).

Korostelina (2007) proposed a structure of national identity composed of three elements: "(1) salience of national identity, (2) satisfaction by fulfilment of

its functions, and (3) adoption of national culture" (p. 185). Salience of national identity reflects the importance of a given national identity to a person who belongs to that nation. This includes a strong sense of belonging to that nation as well as a positive attitude toward one's nation as opposed to a negative one towards other nations, that are shared with other people in his/her nation (p.185). The second element in the national identity structure has to do with the national identity's fulfilment of its five psychological functions for its members; i.e. "(1) providing self-esteem, (2) bestowing social status, (3) personal safety, (4) group support and protection, and (5) recognition by ingroup" (p. 185). The third element of a national identity is the adoption of its culture's "traditions, values, customs, meanings, ethics, holidays, clothes, and foods". These three elements are interconnected, yet they do not necessarily develop in parallel; for example, "[s]ome groups can be very satisfied with national identity, but do not adopt normative culture and traditions. Other groups can have a very salient national identity, but have little satisfaction with it" (Korostelina, 2007, p. 185). Along the same lines, Kelman (2001) argued that "national identity is constantly reconstructed to serve several functions: (1) to provide a sense of uniqueness and unity as well as a sense of belonging to group members, (2) to develop positive self-image, (3) to offer a basis for cultural development, religious beliefs, and way of life, (4) to grant the foundation for ownership of land and resources, and (5) to justify claims and grievances of the group" (as cited in Korostelina, 2007, p. 182). Talking about shared beliefs, however, is not to be mistaken for "stability" or "a deterministic attitude towards the construction of self identity," rather, national identities are constantly "generated and reproduced in discourse," and as such there is not a single national identity; "different identities are discursively constructed according to...

the degree of public exposure of a given utterance, the setting, the topic addressed, the audience to which it is addressed, and so on" (Wodak et al., 1999, as cited in Block, 2007, p. 30).

Although there is disagreement about whether a national language is a pre-requisite for national identity formation, there is no disagreement about the important role a national language plays in the formation of this identity. Some believe that even if language is not necessarily an important component of nationality, it is still the most important means of acculturation into and, one important medium of articulating nationhood (Mackridge, 2010, p. 9). On the other hand, there are those who argue that "national languages are not actually a given, but are themselves constructed as part of the ideological work of nationalism-building" (Joseph, 2004, p. 94), and that they are mutually constructed "like twin edifices built in such a way that each sustains the weight of the other" (Joseph, 2004, pp. 224-225).

***Language, religion and national identity in Egypt.*** This sub-section explains how language and religion are two of the most important markers of Egyptian identity. In fact,

> [t]he social variables used to demarcate the Egyptian identity are both abstract and concrete. They include language, ethnicity, religion, locality (River Nile, pyramids, and so on), shared historical glory, and, finally, moral values and character traits, such as those related to generosity, courage, kindness, patience, and work ethic. (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 43).

A review of the literature on Egyptian and Arab nationalism reveals that the main markers of Egyptian identity that make up the national character are language, religion and a common history. A conference on "Religious Instruction and the Construction of the Egyptian Human Being," held at Al Mansoura University in 1993 offered a definition of the Egyptian national

character which included "a common language and a shared sense of history and culture". Dr. Al-Said Abd al-Aziz Bahwashi adds "'Religion' as 'one of the components of the Egyptian national character—if not the most important'" (Cook 1999, pp. 242-243). Note, however, that it was not until the mid-1950s that Egypt witnessed a "transition to Arab nationalism"; before that "Egypt was then in the throes of a territorial and Pharaonic-Mediterranean nationalism with radically isolationist tendencies" (Gershoni, 1997, p. 11; Coury, 2010)

Suleiman (2003) explained that "the past -a resonant past- is always present in constructions of national identity" (p. 225). In fact, most nationalists in the Arab world "perceived Arab history as an inexhaustible store of communal heroes, events, periods, traditions, and symbols to be collated in order "to produce a single unified 'past' which gives a convincing and emotionally satisfying account of the present situation of their ethnic kinsmen"(Smith, 1986, as cited in Gershoni, 1997, p. 7).

The Egyptian nationalistic discourse has always had the Arabic language at its core; whether by traditionalists who called for the Arabic language to be preserved (Sati' Al-Husri), those who asked for its modernization (Taha Hussein), vernacularization (Salama Musa), or those who argued that the Arabic language is the reason behind Egypt's backwardness and therefore should not be an ingredient in forming Egyptian nationalism (Lewis Awad). When Mostafa Kamil, the renowned Egyptian nationalist, founded the National Party in 1907, "Kamil and his colleagues declared that the National Party (alhizb al-Watane ) could include any person who 'man yazraʕu ʔarðа mißr wa-yatakallamu bi-lugati-ha:' ('Whoever cultivates the land of Egypt and speaks its language')" (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 85).

SA has undoubtedly been the "primary ingredient" in both secularist and Islamist articulations of nationalism in Arabic-speaking countries; “[i]n reaction to Ottoman–Islamic governance, the Arabic language symbolized modernity and secularism. In reaction to western neo-colonialism, it represents tradition and religiosity” (Findlow, 2008, p. 349). Although prominent nationalist writers such as Satii al-Husri, Zaki al-Arsuzi, Abdalla al-Alayli and Nadim al-Bitar acknowledge "[t]he role of other ingredients in the definition of Arab nationalism- for example, history, culture, customs and traditions, geography and common interests [. . .] none of these ingredients is said to have the primacy of language in this nationalism, with the exception of, possibly, history for Satii al-Husri" (Suleiman, 2003, p. 162) who defined as Arab: "Every individual who belongs to the Arab countries and speaks Arabic" (as cited in Suleiman, 2003, p. 132; Kenny,1963, p. 234). To him, "[l]anguage constitutes the life of a nation. History constitutes its feeling. A nation which forgets its history loses its feelings and consciousness. A nation which forgets its language loses its life and [very] being" (as cited in Suleiman, 2003, p. 132-3; Yasin, Muhammad, Agha, Eleiwa, & Khalil, 1982, pp. 76-77). Abdallah al-Nadim goes as far as claiming that "if an Arab loses his language, he loses his nation and his religion" (as cited in Sheehi, 2004, p. 12). Thus, “multilingualism was perceived as a threat to national unity (Miller 2003: 150– 1)” (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 112).

This eminent role that language has played in defining Egyptian national identity is promulgated by media and pop culture. Tunisian singer Latifa defines “the Egyptian” in one of her Egyptian songs as “one who speaks Arabic.” This song goes as follows “‘Do you know how to call out in Arabic, In the name of God and my country, – Then surely you are the Egyptian!’ (from the song yib ʔ a ʔ inta ʔ aki:d il-masri: (“Surely you are the Egyptian”) by

Latefah (2001)" (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 105).

The third component of Egyptian identity is religion. Religion "plays a vital role in defining an identity in the Arab world in general and in Egypt in particular" (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 183). Egyptians usually identify themselves as a deeply religious people. In fact, the Egyptian government curriculum stresses religion as a component of the Egyptian national identity; for example, the ninth-grade Arabic textbook includes the following passage in a lesson about Egyptian identity: "Egyptians are by nature religious and spiritual but they are not fanatics (...) The Egyptian defends his country and is ready to die for it be this Egyptian a Muslim or Christian. Egypt is the cradle of religions, all religions" (as cited in Bassiouney, 2017, p.59). Asik and Erdemir (2010) and Cook (1999) also pointed the heavy presence of religion in Egyptian society.

***3.1.7.3 Language identity.*** Tabouret-Keller (1997) has contended that "language acts are acts of identity" (as cited in Omoniyi, 2006, p. 12). A Language identity is "the assumed and/or attributed relationship between one's sense of self and a means of communication which might be known as a language (e.g. English) a dialect (Geordie) or a sociolect (e.g. football-speak)"(Block, 2007, p. 40). It is about one's relationship with language, "what Leung, Harris and Rampton (1997) call language expertise, language affiliation and language inheritance" (Block, 2007, p. 40), whereby expertise is a person's proficiency in a language, dialect or sociolect that makes him/her accepted by users of that language, dialect or sociolect. Affiliation has to do with the individual's attitudes and feelings towards a language, dialect or sociolect and the degree of attachment s/he feels to them. Inheritance refers to being born into a language or dialect community. However, it does not necessarily mean

that the person has expertise in or a positive affiliation with the inherited language.

Like other identities, a language identity is unstable and "can shift dramatically during one's lifetime. Thus, one can be born into a language community- a question of inheritance and possibly expertise- but then later in life develop a strong affiliation to and expertise in another language community"(Block, 2007, p. 40). This makes essentialist notions of language identity highly problematic. Connecting a language identity to its territorially fixed speakers, such as French speakers in France or Spanish speakers in Spain raises serious questions; “how are the bilinguals and trilinguals in these groups to be identified? Is it appropriate to lump together in the same identity category native speakers of English who exhibit varying bilingual patterns?” (Omoniyi, 2006, p. 17).

Language is a key component in an individual's identity; it "inscribes" individuals within a number of identities including national and religious identities, and sets their 'rank' within the identity. In fact, it “constitutes a text, not just of what the person says, but *of the person,* from which others will read and interpret the person's identity in the richest and most complex ways” (Joseph, 2004, p. 225). Several Islamist Egyptian thinkers, (Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad ‘Abduh, and Hassan al-Banna), believe that a Muslim's primary identity is his/her creed (Khatab, 2004, p. 234). Sayed Qutb, the most prominent theoretician of the Muslim Brotherhood' s ideology, went further to argue that "Islam is the primary identity of all human beings at birth. Those who testify that there is no god but Allah thereby affirm that their identity is Islamic. Rejecting Islam does not change its universality" (Khatab, 2004, p. 219). Qutb does not deny the role of Arabic in identity formation; he "calls Arabic language

after Islam ‘Islamic language,’ lends it great importance and uses it to support his Islamist view of nationalism"(Khatab, 2004, p. 224). He gives it international status; “Arabic became the ‘Islamic language’ of the Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs; and Islamic language is not merely an alphabet, letters, or words, but it can be seen as ‘The Lingua Franca’ of the Muslim ummah [nation]” (Khatab, 2004, p. 227). In fact, “the entry for ‘Koran’ in The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam summarizes the traditional Muslim position neatly (Glassé 1989: 46): Muslims consider the Koran to be holy scripture only in the original Arabic of its revelation. The Koran, while it may be translated, is only ritually valid in Arabic. This is connected with the notion of Arabic as a ‘sacred Arabic’” (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 110). Although SA is the language of the Coptic Bible and “religious books […] are translated into SA […,] this does not imply that SA has the same divine indexes that it has for Muslims” (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 111). Fergusson (1972) used the term “myths” to refer to Arabs’ belief that the Arabic language is superior to other languages because “of its rhythmical cadences, its ‘grammatical symmetry and “logical” structure’ (ibid.:377), the ‘vastness and richness of its lexicon’ (ibid.) and its ‘sacred character’(ibid.:378)"(as cited in Suleiman, 2003, p. 67).

On the other hand, a second language identity refers to the degree of an individual's audibility in that language. Audibility is not only about intelligibility but is also about many other factors such as speaking with the right accent and displaying the right social and cultural features to be admitted into a community of practice. Audibility in the second language

> is about developing an identity in an additional language not only in terms of linguistic features, but also dress, expressions, movement, behaviour and other forms of semiotic behaviour. Audibility may thus be seen as corresponding to the extent to which the individual can 'do' the

multimodal package required by a particular community of practice. (Block, 2007, p. 42)

### 3.2 Globalization and Identity

"Globalization" was first coined in 1985 by the economist Theodore Levitt to refer to "changes in global economics" (Spring, 2008, p. 331). However, although it is usually used to refer to global economic processes, globalization has several other facets; technological, political, and cultural. These can be further categorized into seven areas; namely “military, governance, trade and finance, environment, migration, popular media, and communications and transportation (Spring, 2008, p. 334). One comprehensive definition of this phenomenon was put forward by Hall (1996) for whom it refers to "those processes, operating on a global scale, which cut across national boundaries, integrating and connecting communities and organizations in new space-time combinations, making the world in reality and in experience more interconnected" (as cited in Larrain, 1994, p. 151).

Numerous publications have been written about globalization; yet, there is little agreement on whether its effects, particularly cultural effects such as the domination of the English language and Western cultures, are positive or negative. In fact, there is disagreement even on whether such domination exists. Holton (2000) identified three different positions vis-à-vis globalization's consequences:

> the homogenization thesis, in which globalization leads to cultural convergence; the polarization thesis, which posits cultural wars between Western globalization and its opponents; and, finally, the hybridization, or syncretism, thesis, in which globalization encourages a blending of the diverse set of cultural repertoires made available through cross-border exchange. (p. 141)

Globalization is seen as a threat to the cultural identities of many people (Kale, 2004, p. 98). On the other hand, Bhagwati (2009) in his book *In Defense of Globalization* has contended that "economic globalization is a culturally enriching process" (p. 107). He agreed with Charles Leadbeater, the author of *Up the Down Escalator: Why the Global Pessimists Are Wrong,* that "many varieties and hybrids of the language have emerged. The pessimists' black and white world rules out the possibility of the people reaching these fruitful combinations in language, commerce and technology" (as cited in Bhagwati, 2009, p. 109). Likewise, Appadurai (1990) criticised the homogenisation theory for its failure to take into account "that at least as rapidly as forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies they tend to become indigenized in one or other way: this is true of music and housing styles as much as it is true of science and terrorism, spectacles and constitutions" (p. 295)

One of the highly debated effects of globalization is the dominance of the English language and its claimed effects on the identities of the people who use it either by choice or by, what Troudi and Jendli (2011) call, a "choiceless choice" (p. 41). Within the critical stance towards linguistic globalization, there are three main positions: Phillipson (1992) takes a strictly critical stance towards the hegemony of English in his theory of linguistic imperialism, while Pennycook (2003) agrees that the spread of English creates and fosters global inequalities, yet "rejects the structural determinism of some of the critical views on English in the world." Canagarajah (1999), on the other hand, adopts a "critical but less radical view" that "recognizes that language learning is ideological and that learners face a number of challenges but the solution is 'to negotiate with the agencies of power for personal and collective empowerment'" (as cited in Troudi & Jendli, 2011, p. 25).

Joseph (2004), professor of applied linguistics at the University of Edinburgh, refuted the claim that the English language is a tool of cultural hegemony for the following three reasons: First,

> language is culturally 'neutral'. Even if, historically, it has developed within a particular culture, it does not *in itself* spread that culture to other people who learn the language. The language must be embedded within the cultural habitus in order to function as the vehicle in which the culture will be acquired. Transferred to a different habitus, the language will mould itself to that habitus, rather than the other way around. (p. 167)

Second, English itself is withdrawing in favour of other languages; "[t]here is, after all, not even a single country in which English was once dominant where it is not today *retreating* as a mother tongue, sharing that space . . . with [other] languages". Third, new technological developments such as the internet and cellular phones hinder the hegemony of any one language (pp. 189-190). These technological developments provide the opportunity for a two-way flow of ideas, languages and cultures, if the communities whose languages and cultures are threatened seize this opportunity. An example of such flow is the increasing presence in the West of several musical and culinary products from non-Western cultures (Maalouf, 2000, pp. 90-91). In fact, "the world of today also provides those who want to preserve endangered cultures with the means of self-defence"; though globalization poses a threat to cultural diversity, particularly "to diversity of languages and of lifestyles" (Maalouf, 2000, p. 104). Moreover,

> the scale on which globalisation is taking place, together with the dizzying speed of change, make all of us feel as if we're being submerged by it all and unable to affect the course of events. But we must keep reminding ourselves that this feeling is extremely widespread, and shared even by those we tend to think of as safely ensconced on the top of the heap. (Maalouf, 2000, p. 102)

While I disagree with the extremely critical view of globalization as an irreversible cultural tsunami that will sweep the rest of the world, and while I also agree with Maalouf's belief in agency of both individuals and cultures, I neither share his exaggeration of the role of individuals as agents nor his underestimation of the powerful winds of globalization. When it comes to language, for example, it could be theoretically correct that virtual space is open to all languages and that technological development can provide room for all languages (for instance the ease of typing in Arabic on my Samsung cellular phone compared to my old Nokia made me, like many others, write more Facebook statuses and SMS messages in Arabic); however my experience as a university teacher of teenagers and early adults, and my experience as a mother of an 18 year-old daughter and a 12 year-old son have shown me first-hand the increasing encroachment of the English language, and "Western", particularly American, lifestyles and cultural values, especially through American media and the decreasing role played by SA in the lives of children and young adults. My observations have been voiced in several other studies (Morrow & Castleton, 2011; Pessoa & Rajakumar, 2011) in the form of warning calls against language loss of SA because of the dominance of the English language in the educational and economic fields.

The terms "West" and "Western" are not very precise because they ignore the diversity of thoughts and worldviews within "Western" societies. However, I prefer to use them because they are commonly used in both popular and academic discourses, without endorsing or implying that all these societies and individuals are similar.

**3.2.1 The Arab world and globalization**. Holton's (2002) "homogenization, polarization, hybridization" division is pertinent to the Arab

intellectuals' reactions to globalization. Najjar (2005) and Mahfuz (2000) divide Arab intelligentsia's attitudes towards globalization along Holton's lines into three major groups: absolute opponents, absolute proponents, and cautious receptors. First, there are those for whom globalization is synonymous with cultural invasion and imperialism “threatening to dominate people, undermine their distinctive ‘cultural personality’ and destroy their ‘heritage,’ ‘authenticity,’ ‘beliefs’ and ‘national identity’”. Second, there are those "secularist by inclination" who argue that it's no longer possible for people to remain “‘cocooned’ within their own boundaries to ruminate upon their heritage, be its captives and nurse nostalgia for an ‘imagined’ past”. They call for interacting with and benefiting from globalization's “‘positive opportunities’ in knowledge, science and technology, without necessarily losing their Arab-Islamic cultural individuality”. Third are those who call “(probably naively) for finding an appropriate form of globalization that is compatible with the national and cultural interests of the people”. To them, globalization is inevitable and Arabs have no choice but to interact with it; it can neither be totally accepted nor rejected (Najjar, 2005, p. 91). Yasin (2009), for instance, argues that there is no room for shunning globalization, and believes that we should interact creatively with the global society; an interaction that is neither too cautious about cultural peculiarity nor zealously accepting of all the political and cultural values promoted by the Other (p. 48)

Maalouf (2000) noted that even in developed Western countries “universally respected and with a flourishing culture, modernization becomes suspect as soon as it is perceived as a Trojan horse introduced by another culture that is both alien and overbearing” (p. 62). If such is the case for Western peoples,

> It is all the easier to imagine the reactions of the various non-Western peoples whose every step, for many generations, has already been accompanied by a sense of defeat and self-betrayal. They have had to admit that their ways were out of date, that everything they produced was worthless compared with what was produced by the West, that their attachment to traditional medicine was superstitious, their military glory just a memory, the great men they had been brought up to revere-the poets, scholars, soldiers, saints and travellers-disregarded by the rest of the world, their religion suspected of barbarism, their language now studied only by a handful of specialists, while they had to learn other people's languages if they wanted to survive and work and remain in contact with the rest of mankind. Whenever they speak with a Westerner it is always in his language, almost never in their own. There are millions of people south and east of the Mediterranean who can speak English, French, Spanish and Italian. How many Englishmen, Frenchmen, Spaniards or Italians have thought it worthwhile to study Arabic or Turkish? (Maalouf, 2000, p. 62)

Amin (2010), however, has broken up reactions to globalization into two main positions (for and against) divided into the following five sub-categories:

1. Those who see in globalization nothing but the division of labor and the spread of modern technology from the economically advanced countries to all corners of the world, and hence multiplication of production. They are therefore willing to forgive any negative effects that globalization may have on cultural identity, and are even willing to say that this effect on identity is insignificant, and might even go as far as saying that cultural identity will benefit from globalization.
2. Those who are fascinated with Western civilization in general [. . .] who wish that their peoples quickly catch up with the West's achievements, and believe that globalization is the way to do so. Some of them are cynical about "cultural heritage", which to them is synonymous with backwardness, poverty, sterility, idleness and yielding to superstitions and falsehoods for which there is no role in today's modern world.

3. Those who oppose and hate globalization because it implies economic exploitation since it leaves behind unemployment in capital countries and exploits cheap labour in less developed ones.
4. Those who despise globalization for religious reasons. Globalization came from countries which religion is not Islam. It is as well secular; which to them is synonymous with infidelity. They believe that the threatened identity is the religious one.
5. Those who see globalization as a threat to the cultural identity of the nation. (pp. 42-45)

Although Arab intellectuals have various attitudes towards globalization, they generally view it "as an American design to disseminate American culture as a model for the whole world" (Najjar, 2005. p. 92). In fact, the bulk of Arab rhetoric about this phenomenon fears, rejects, suspects and condemns it; from Libya (Al-Zaydi, 2006), Saudi Arabia (Al-Malqi, 1995), Egypt (Al-Naqa, 2003; Al-Sayyid, 2004; Amin, 2010 ; Qattaya, 2003; Ramadan, 2006; Yasin, 2009); Morocco ( Tawil, 2000; Al-Jabiri, 1998, as cited in Al-Dessouki, 2000), Yemen (Al-wali, 2003). This fear is not unjustified given the unfortunate encounter with Western colonialism in the 19th Century and the American interference in Middle Eastern politics (Cook, 1999; Najjar, 2005).

Najjar (2005) explained that:

> Globalization is not the first phenomenon that Muslims regard as a threat to their faith. Westernization or modernization, in general, has always been suspect of being a “cultural invasion” by the Christian West. This suspicion goes all the way back to the Crusades, and to this day Christians, particularly Western Christians, are called Crusaders (salibiyyun). Moreover, recent Western colonization and imperialistic domination of most of the Muslim world, the creation and the unqualified support of the state of Israel, and the current invasion of two Muslim countries, Afghanistan and Iraq, have intensified Arab and Muslim fears

> and hatred of the West. Hence, globalization seems to be the culmination of historical developments aimed at undermining Islam. (p. 94)

Aşık and Erdemir (2010) contended that "[i]n the imagination of Egyptian radical Islamists, the experience of Westernization is associated with the event of British colonialism and the subsequent developments. Islamist reaction to Westernization, however, does not solely target colonialism but also the post-colonial state" (p. 112).

When people feel that their identity is threatened, "the search for identity becomes one of the moral resources for attaining security" (Appadurai, 1992, as cited in Bokser-Liwerant, 2002, p. 259). Castells (1999) also contended that "[i]n a world of global flows of wealth, power and images, the search for an identity, collective or individual, assigned or built becomes the fundamental source of social meaning" (as cited in Bokser-Liwerant, 2002, p. 259). Globalization has caused many to turn to religion as their primary identity; Kale (2004) argued that "[b]ecause religion and nationhood are for the most part rooted in geography, the loss of national ethos [as a result of globalization] turns many to religion as their primary source of identity" (p. 99). A student at the AUC illustrated this search for identity in religion: “[W]ith globalization, we are witnessing the invasion of American culture. Young Egyptians desire, and internalize it on the one hand; but on the other hand, they try to sustain their traditional Islamic identity, so we come to face the various confusions and conflicts in our culture” (Asik & Erdemir, 2010, p 126).

These concerns about cultural and linguistic identity loss have been echoed by several studies not only in Egypt and its neighbouring Arab-Muslim societies, or in traditional societies like Japan (Hashimoto, 2000), Hong Kong (Gu, 2010; Cheung & Sung, 2016), and Korea (Choi, 2004), but also in some

European countries such as Spain (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2011) and France (Gordon & Meunier, 2001).

**3.2.2 Globalization, education, and identity.** Economic globalization has altered educational goals and practices in many ways. Because of globalization, the state has lost its dominance on several areas of public life among which is education. Most globalization and postmodernist theorists agree that there is "a fundamental shift in the very nature of education as a national or state 'project'" (Green, 2006, p. 193). Donald (1992) argued that postmodern, globalized societies are so culturally diverse that transmitting a common culture through education is no longer possible. Usher and Edwards (1994) have also argued that education can "no longer readily function as a means of reproducing society or as an instrument of large-scale social engineering" (as cited in Green, 2006, p. 193). Instead most governments have new similar educational agendas. Spring (2008) pointed out that these agendas are dominated with words that up till now belonged to the economics repertoire; governments are now "investing in education to develop human capital or better workers and to promote economic growth" (p. 332). University students are trained before graduation to *sell* themselves to potential employers. Mass migration of workers, according to Spring (2008), has led to worldwide "discussions about multicultural education." Organizations like the United Nations, the World Bank, and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) started promoting these educational agendas and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially those interested in environmental and human rights issues are trying to influence educational curricula (pp. 332-333).

Spring (2008) categorized interpretations of the process of educational globalization into four major groups. First are world culture theorists who believe in an ideal Western model of schooling that other cultures are moving towards. Second is the world systems approach that divides the world into two major unequal zones, with the United States, the European Union, and Japan as the dominating core whose "goal is to legitimize its power by inculcating its values into periphery nations." Third is postcolonial analysis that "sees globalization as an effort to impose particular economic and political agendas on the global society that benefit wealthy and rich nations at the expense of the world's poor." Finally, are the world culturalist theorists who "[emphasize] cultural variations and the borrowing and lending of educational ideas within a global context" (p. 343).

Neoliberals and the GATS have encouraged the privatization of education, particularly higher education (Spring, 2008, p. 353). Whereas Friedrich Hayek and his follower Murray Rothbard called for a complete privatization of education, neoconservatives advocated privatization within governmental control by means of testing and curriculum standards (as cited in Spring, 2008, p. 343).

As explained in chapter two, due to globalization, Egypt has witnessed a phenomenal surge of private schools and universities that teach foreign curricula and/or the Egyptian national curriculum in a foreign language, usually English. This has led to growing concern about a potential cultural estrangement of the new generations particularly with regards to linguistic, religious, and national identities. Goweda (2009), a renowned Egyptian poet and thinker, expressed three main reservations about foreign universities in Egypt. His first worry is that students do not study Arabic in these universities,

and that the future generations will not learn their mother tongue. His second concern is that each of these universities offers history courses that cover the original country's history not Egyptian history. Students learn about historical figures from those cultures yet ignore their own cultural figures. Goweda's third fear is the absence of religious education in these universities. He warned that foreign universities would result in a mixture of graduates; each with a different background, which could affect their sense of belonging; especially that these universities "do not hesitate to inject ideas that are against our ethical, intellectual, religious and human principles" [Translation mine]. Goweda called for including history, national symbols, religious tenets, ethics, and principles of allegiance and belonging as obligatory components in the curricula of these universities. He also asked that no more universities be opened till the present experience is evaluated (p. 38).

Goweda (2009) overlooked the fact that most of the students who join private universities are those who have already been heavily exposed to foreign cultures in private and international schools; he also overlooked the enormous effect of international media and the internet on the students' identities. Goweda is not the sole voice sounding an alarm against the possible detrimental effects of foreign education on the Egyptian students' cultural identities. Many across the Arab and Islamic worlds have expressed suspicion towards foreign, usually Western, curricula and towards the use of English as a medium of instruction that they perceive as part of a bigger Western conspiracy against Arab and Muslim cultures. In Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Egypt, and other Arab and Islamic countries, there are concerns about English as a carrier of foreign values that are perceived as detrimental to identity. Mohd-Asraf (2005) reported that English is perceived in

Malaysia, “by many as being the embodiment and carrier of Judeo-Christian cultural values, and that of Western civilization, and conjures various images—positive as well as negative—to the myriad people that use it” (p. 104). He also reported concern among a lot of Muslim parents “that learning English might lead to their children becoming more westernized, which is seen as something negative if it contradicts Islamic teachings or principles” (Mohd-Asraf, 2005, p. 110). This fear becomes more significant for “Muslims that have lived under colonialist and imperialist rule [who] may have formed even stronger impressions against English, or developed negative attitudes towards English, associating English with the colonialists or the imperialists” (Mohd-Asraf, 2005, p. 116).

Bassiouney (2014) cited several examples of this fear and apprehension towards the English language in Egypt where “The Arabic Language Academy in Cairo remains active and the call to maintain an Arab identity against an imperialist hegemonic Western world still prevails” (p. 114). One of these examples is a call by Izz al-Den (2006) “to confront the conspiracy against us to weaken SA [Standard Arabic]” (as cited in Bassiouney, 2014, p. 118). Another example is a statement by ISESCO Secretary-General Abdel Aziz Al-Twigri in a 2007 conference titled *The Arab Child’s Language in the Age of Globalisation* that was “held at the Arab League [and] focused on the role of language in shaping identity and how to promote its unity among future generations. […] Twigri spoke of ‘language pollution,’ the condition whereby the influence of foreign languages— those of economically predominant countries— corrupts Arabic, especially among children” (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 115). A further example given by Bassiouney (2014) is the call by a Salafi MP in 2012 that

English that “was there to colonize Egypt […] be banned from schools, so that Egyptians could go back to their true identity” (p. 145).

### 3.3 Identity Research in Egypt and Arab/Islamic countries

The number of research studies that investigate the effects of foreign education and global English on the Arab identity, culture, and language has been increasing in the last few years. Numerous studies have examined the effects of foreign education and English as a medium of instruction on students’ identities in all stages of education. This section reviews studies done in Egypt as well as in other Arab and/or Islamic countries that share a relatively similar educational and cultural context, namely the UAE, Qatar, Oman and Malaysia. These studies can be grouped into two major categories; those that predict an identity loss among new Arab generations and a bleak future for the Arabic language because of the encroachment of Western culture and English language on them. The second category, on the other hand, highlights individual agency as an important negotiation factor in the face of cultural and linguistic globalization.

**3.3.1 Identity loss.** Al-bakri and Abdel-Fattah (2006) compared identity values and normative preferences of Mass Communication students at the AUC with their counterparts at Cairo University through surveying students in their first and fourth years in both universities. The researchers asked participants to identify themselves by choosing among several statements that put the following three identity ingredients in different orders: Egyptian, Arab, and Muslim/Christian. The results suggest that Cairo university students tend to identify themselves as Muslims first then as Egyptians, in contrast to AUC students who identify themselves as Egyptians first and as Muslims/Christians next. The researcher argued that it is difficult to claim that this difference is

caused by AUC since the same difference was noticed in first year students who have not been influenced by their universities yet, which means that this "identity gap" is prior to their joining the university. Results of this study did not find any statistically significant difference in Arab identity between fourth year students in both universities; yet the difference was noticeable among first year students. The researchers suggested that this difference between first year students could be attributable to their different social and educational backgrounds (El-Bakry & Abdelfattah, 2006, pp. 846-848). The study also found a difference in religiosity between AUC and Cairo University students. The researchers concluded that AUC contributes into this gap by decreasing its students' religiosity whereas Cairo University increases the indicators of this religiosity (p. 851).

Ramadan's study (2006) of the American schools in Cairo and their effects on national value systems confirmed El-Bakri and Ramadan's conclusion that the difference between students in national universities (Cairo University) and foreign universities (AUC) regarding identity is prior to their joining these universities. The study that compared the objectives and value systems of the Egyptian and American educational systems and analysed several stories taught in grades three to eight concluded that American schools in Egypt form graduates who are estranged from their social environment. These schools, argued the researcher, marginalize the national culture and language and, directly and indirectly, transmit the American culture and values to their students, making them strongly connected and loyal to the American cultural values at the expense of their loyalty and belonging to the Egyptian society (pp. 222-224).

This concern about Arabic language and culture was echoed by Troudi (2009) who explained that Arab students in private American and British schools have Arabic proficiency problems because these schools treat Arabic "as a second or additional language". He further argued that "[t]his problem is exacerbated by lack of cultural attachment caused partly by a curriculum where societal values, its history, challenges, and future are not given primary attention" (p. 208).

Abu-Bakr (2013) also warned against a "dangerous and tightly planned conspiracy against the Arabic language" [Translation mine] (p. 502). His study titled "Multiculturalism in the curricula of international secondary schools in Egypt and its influence on the development of basic skills of the Arabic language and cultural identity among students*"* examined the components of Arab-Islamic cultural identity (Religion, Arabic language, national identity, history, cultural heritage, citizenship, and human rights) in curricular and extra-curricular activities of international private secondary schools in Egypt (French, German, American, British) and compared them to national secondary schools. He also visited these schools and met with students and parents. The results of his study, that was published after I had collected my data, suggest that 1) students in international schools show less commitment to the above-mentioned components of the Arab-Islamic cultural identity. Abu-Bakr called teaching in a foreign language a "war on the Arab culture [*athaqafa al-qawmiyya*] and all what it stands for, values, traditions, religion, and everything related to the Arabic language" [Translation mine] (p. 502).

Contrary to these studies that predicted a bleak future for the Arabic language and culture if no measures are taken, other studies reported a clear process of negotiation on the part of Arab students, what Castells (1997)

referred to as “resistance” (as cited in Hasanen, Al-kandari, & Al-sharoufi, 2013, p. 558).

**3.3.2 Resistance and individual agency.** Lash (2001) found out that “[d]espite AUC’s Western foundations, Arab cultural orientations are not being destroyed and replaced with American orientations, but rather a process of hybridization pervades the everyday lives of AUC students”. Lash explained that the process of hybridity starts prior to students’ arrival at AUC because of their privileged socio-economic status and their highly educated, cosmopolitan parents that predispose them to thrive in “thirdspaces”. Given this particular situation, Lash contended that the students’ exposure to the American liberal arts curriculum reinforces rather than destroys their cosmopolitan identity. He further argued that “[s]tudents struggle, however, when confronted by those elements of Egyptian society that do not have access to thirdspaces, and are opposed to the imported values on the basis of which the spaces are structured. The imported values, of course, reflect the modern forces of globalization” (pp. 184-188).

In harmony with Lash (2001), Washima et al. (1996) reported that the Muslim Malay students they studied “appeared to be confident and that they were in control—that they were not being controlled by the English language and that they viewed the learning and using of English as not necessarily being in conflict with Islam” (as cited in Mohd-Asraf, 2005, p. 113).

Another qualitative study, by Pedersen (2010), examined how “advanced academic writers - graduate students, professors, and professional researchers” in Jordan negotiate their cultural identities through language, more specifically they attempted to answer the following research questions: “How do researchers outside Kachru’s “inner circle” conceive of their relationship to

English? Do they feel disempowered by the dominance of English in academic writing?" (p. 286). The study exposed a complex relationship between the participants and the English language; they "accepted English as a means to an economic and professional end, but they also tried to resist its over-bearing influence on their home language and culture in surprising ways. Participants reported finding both empowerment and disempowerment in English" (p. 286). While they clearly recognized the practical value of English in their academic and professional lives, they also disclosed resentment towards its effect on their relationship with Arabic. An "intriguing finding" in this study is the belief by many participants that "English did not necessarily carry with it Anglo-American cultural associations. Instead, in many cases they viewed English as the language of their culture, or at least one of the cultures to which they described belonging—the culture of international science or their scholarly discipline. […] the participants often saw themselves as the users and shapers of certain types of English, not as non-native outsiders passively colonized" (pp. 286-287). Pedersen (2010), however, clarified that "Although they wanted to limit their use of English, participants could not always control the way English shaped their lives […]. While participants had options for responding to English's dominance, their choices were necessarily limited" (pp. 299-300).

Badry (2011) "explore[d] the impact of global English on the local cultural identity of the young generations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)" (p. 81). Data was collected through both a survey and group discussions with Arab undergraduate students aged 19-25. The results indicate that the students did not see a contradiction between their "appropriation of outer layers of western cultural behaviours" and their sense of Arabness (p. 81). Badry argued that their "identity as Arabs no longer centres on the Arabic language alone as its core"

(p.85). As multilinguals, “their linguistic repertoires allow them to enter group memberships without necessarily feeling identity fragmentation or living this multiplicity in negative terms (Badry, 2007). This is particularly the case when individuals feel a sense of ownership of their languages and cultures” (p. 88).

Pessoa and Rajakumar’s (2011) pilot study of undergraduate students at Carnegie Melon University in Qatar showed that “[s]tudents embrace their knowledge of English for academic and professional uses and maintain their link to their culture and religion through Arabic" (p. 168). The researchers concluded that "[d]espite the potential loss of academic and professional Arabic in Qatar, the language will most likely be maintained in the near future as it is used as an identity marker and a link to their culture, with English having its own uses and domains"(p. 169).

Ronesi’ s (2011) study of female students at Sharjah American University in the UAE also revealed that the participants did not see using English and being Arab as contradictory. The participants actively and consciously engaged in activities “to preserve – and even improve – their spoken Arabic and to engage in maintaining an Arab identity in ways that made sense to them in their linguistically and culturally complex lives” (p. 65). An interesting finding in this study is the participants’ use of English to negotiate “an Arab identity tailored to their own specifications” through using their English language proficiency in writing and speaking English to challenge stereotypes about Arabs (p. 68). These findings are in accord with Canagarajah’s (1999) “notion of resistance which suggests that, as hybrid subjects, postcolonial students have the power to ‘negotiate, alter, and oppose political structures, and reconstruct their languages, cultures, and identities to their advantage’” (as cited in Ronesi, 2011, p. 52).

A more recent study (Hasanen, al-Kandari, & Al-sharoufi, 2013) which looked at "the influence of English language usage and international media on the strength of either national or global identity" of Kuwaiti university students, reported that "agents of localisation" such as parents and national TV (p. 560) can counteract the impact of "the Western-style socialisation imposed by English-language schooling" (p. 558).

These contradictory contentions revolving around the identity loss of students receiving an English-medium education, the scarcity of identity research about foreign university students in Egypt, and the absence of studies looking at national, religious, and linguistic identities simultaneously, shaped my research focus. The majority of identity-related research in Egypt studied pre-university students; of the few that researched university students, only one included students from a foreign university, namely AUC. On the other hand, to my knowledge, no empirical studies conducted in Egypt or other countries in the Arab/Islamic World, at the time this research was conducted, examined all the three identity components (national, religious, linguistic) that this study investigates, and that are in fact the main concern of the ongoing debate related to the role of imported education in students' alleged identity loss. The bulk of research focused on language identity or else studied the impact of EMI on students' cultural identity; studies that looked at national and religious identities alongside language identity, put them all under Arabness or cultural identity. As far as I know, no studies researched religious identity per se, although some brushed on it. Studies on identity construction in Egypt neither referred to Christian students nor examined if they constructed their religious and linguistic identities differently than Muslim students, considering the absence in Christianity of the link between SA and religion that exists in Islam, and given

that these imported curricula come from countries where Christianity is the main religion. Moreover, none of the studies is longitudinal or qualitative; whereas identity construction is an ongoing process that is best studied over time and through qualitative methods.

The current study, thus, aimed to fill some of these research gaps by adopting a longitudinal research design and a qualitative methodology that both allow for a deeper understanding of identity construction and negotiation. It attempted to examine AUC students' construction and negotiation of their national, religious, and linguistic identities by first understanding the kinds of identities they come to AUC with, and tracing the changes their identities go through over their first year.

It also examined each of the students' national, religious, and linguistic identities without putting them all under the vague label of "cultural identity" that encompasses several other identity components. This research goes beyond the linguistic EMI feature of foreign education as it considers other important factors, namely the liberal curriculum, the foreign teachers, and the extra-curricular activities. Unlike previous studies that probably included Christian students but brushed aside their peculiarity as a religious minority, the sample in this study not only included both Muslim and Christian students, it also gave them room to express their often-suppressed voice.

This research attempts to answer the following research question: How do freshman Egyptian AUC students construct and negotiate their national, religious, and linguistic identities?

# Chapter 4: Methodology

During the early stages of this research, I was confronted with several ontological and epistemological questions. Oftentimes I had to peel the onion to reveal the hidden assumptions underlying my research questions and proposed methods of research, a task that was at first as painful and messy as peeling a real onion, yet a crucial stage of my research process. The questions I was confronted with were analogous to the four questions Crotty (1998) believed to be "the basic elements of any research process" and advised researchers to carefully explain:

- What *methods* do we propose to use?
- What *methodology* governs our choice and use of methods?
- What *theoretical perspective* lies behind the methodology in question?
- What *epistemology* informs this theoretical perspective? (p. 2)

It is precisely these questions that this chapter attempts to answer. First, I will describe the theoretical framework that informs my research, second I will explain the methodological perspective underlying my choice of methodology, and finally I will give a detailed account of the methods I have chosen, how I applied them, and the challenges I faced.

## 4.1 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical perspective is "the philosophical stance lying behind a methodology". It is of utmost importance for one to spell out one's assumptions about the world because it is these assumptions that determine how one researches it (Crotty, 1998, p. 66). The following two sub-sections explain the theoretical frameworks within which the current study has been conducted; namely constructionism and interpretivism.

**4.1.1. Constructionism.** One of the most important tenets of the constructionist world view is its rejection of objectivism's belief in the existence of meaning and "objective truth" independently of a person's awareness. Meaning is, therefore, constructed not discovered, which entails that different people can construct meanings related to the same phenomenon differently (Crotty, 1998, pp. 8-9). Accordingly, there are varied and multiple meanings (Creswell, 2007, p. 20) but "no true or valid interpretation. There are useful interpretations, to be sure, and these stand over against interpretations that appear to serve no useful purpose"(Crotty, 1998, p. 47).

Constructionists, however, vary in their degree of adherence to this view. Contextual constructionists, for example, acknowledge the existence and influence of objective reality, in contrast to strict constructionists who believe in multiple and equally-meaningful realities. Another controversy within constructionism relates to what it is that is constructed. While strong/objective constructionism believes that the world or "real state of affairs" are socially constructed, mild/interpretive interpretations of constructionism maintain that what is constructed are meanings and interpretations of the world, not the world itself *(The Cambridge Dictionary*, 1999; Harris, 2010). The difference between these two sides of the constructivist paradigm determines what each of them considers to be worthy of examination. Objective constructionists believe that what should be studied are "real states of affairs" not their interpretation, unlike interpretive constructionists who "try to suspend belief and disbelief in reality" and who are more concerned with examining "the meanings people live by and how those meanings are created" (Harris, 2010, p. 5). It is noteworthy, however, that "the difference between objective and interpretive constructionism is a

matter of degree. It is unlikely that any author or report could be placed utterly at one end or the other of this continuum"(Harris, 2010, p. 17).

Hammerly (2011) criticized strong constructionism because it "conflates knowledge and belief, and ignores the everyday necessity of distinguishing between what is true and what it taken to be true" (as cited in Brinkmann, 2013, p. 73). Another criticism against strong constructionism is that it can be used by powerful groups to create "truths" that serve their interests and forcefully persuade the less powerful to believe in them. Furthermore, it "leads to the consequence that most questions about research design can be ignored, because all knowledge is seen as a unique function of the steps taken to obtain it" (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 73).

Burningham and Cooper (1999) explained that criticism of constructionism is based on mistaking constructionism's epistemological claims for ontological ones:

> [S]ocial constructionism as discussed by Berger and Luckman (1991) makes no ontological claims, confining itself to the social construction of knowledge, therefore confining itself to making epistemological claims only. [To illustrate,] [t]he idea that disease can and does exist as an independent reality is compatible with the social constructionist view. The naming of disease and indeed what constitutes disease is arguably a different matter and has the potential to be socially constructed. This is not the same as claiming that it has no independent existence beyond language. (Andrews, 2012, p. 42)

The current study adopts Andrews' midway position in which he acknowledges that reality/the world exists independently of our perceptions of it, yet we cannot have direct access to that independent reality. Researchers cannot reproduce social phenomena; they can only represent them from their perspectives.

Representation thereby implies "acknowledging reflexivity, which is acknowledgement that researchers influence the research process" (Andrews, 2012, p. 42).

Since all Knowledge and meaning is socially constructed "*in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context*", the researcher is seen as a co-constructor of these meanings" (Crotty 1998, p. 42). The researcher is also fully aware of and alert to other elements in the research context, be they social, political, historical, or geographical because "[t]he world and objects in the world may be in themselves meaningless; yet they are our partners in the generation of meaning and need to be taken seriously" (Crotty 1998, pp. 42-44).

The terms "constructivism" and "social constructionism" are sometimes used interchangeably (Burr, 1995, p. 2); *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (1999), for example, has an entry titled "Social constructivism also called social constructionism". On the other hand, Young and Colin (2004) and Crotty (1998) set the two terms apart; constructivism is more focused on the individual construction of the world, while constructionism is more concerned with its social construction. They prefer to "reserve the term *constructivism* for epistemological considerations focusing exclusively on 'the meaning-making activity of the individual mind' and to use *constructionism* where the focus includes 'the collective generation [and transmission] of meaning'" (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). This study follows suit in distinguishing between the two terms. I use the term "constructionism" because first I am not exclusively interested in the individual cognitive processes that accompany identity construction, but also interested in identity as it is constructed within a social context, and second because "'constructivism' is sometimes used to refer to Piagetian theory and to

a particular kind of perceptual theory, and could cause confusion" (Burr, 1995, p. 2).

**4.1.2. Interpretivism.** The interpretivist paradigm, reaches back to Max Weber's distinction between the different purposes of the human and natural sciences and their respective research methods:

> The human sciences are concerned with understanding the world (Verstehen) and therefore use qualitative research methods, while the natural sciences are concerned with explaining (Erklären) the causal relations that exist in the world and use quantitative methods […] In the case of nature, science is looking for consistencies, regularities, the 'law' (*nomo*s) that [it] obtains. In the case of human affairs-in historical studies for instance- we are concerned with the individual (*idios*) case. (Crotty, 1998, p. 67)

The interpretivist worldview, which came as a reaction to positivism (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006), is based on the theoretical belief that reality is multiple, fluid, and socially constructed (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, pp. 31-35; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Merriam, 2009, p. 9). Interpretive social scientists value how people make sense of the world in which they live and how they share those meanings. They believe that meaning is made through social interaction and is different across people and places. In other words, "[t]here is not one reality out there to be measured; objects and events are understood by different people differently, and those perceptions are the reality-or realities-that social science should focus on" (Rubin & Rubin 1995, pp. 31-35). As such, interpretive researchers seek to understand the participants' views of their lived or observed experiences by "seek[ing] thick and rich descriptions of the cultural and topical arenas they are studying" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 35).

## 4.2 Research Questions

This study aims to investigate the impact that the American University in Cairo has on the Egyptian students' construction of their national, religious, and linguistic identities. It attempts to understand the individual and complex ways in which the students construct and negotiate these identities. It specifically attempts to answer the following research question:

> How do freshman students at the AUC construct and negotiate their national, religious, and linguistic identities in the context of this foreign educational institution?

## 4.3 Research Methodology

To answer the above-stated research question that sought to explore and understand in depth how AUC freshman students construct and negotiate their national, religious, and language identities in relation to their experiences at the AUC, I deemed it most appropriate to adopt a qualitative approach. First,"[t]he primary strength of qualitative research is its potential to explore a topic in depth" (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). Second, qualitative research emphasizes the process of making meanings; it "seek[s] answers to questions that stress how social experiences are created and given meaning" in contrast to quantitative research that stresses "measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 8).

I used a qualitative approach because it is in harmony with my ontological, epistemological- spelled out in the previous sections of my methodology chapter- and axiological assumptions. Creswell (2003) explained that the choice of qualitative research or any other type of research, follows from a number of assumptions about "the nature of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows what she or he knows (epistemology), the role of values in

the research (axiology), the language of research (rhetoric), and the methods used in the process (methodology)" (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 16). Conducting qualitative research implies that the researcher:

- acknowledges that reality is socially constructed (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) and multiple (Creswell, 2007; Barbour, 2007, p. 7) [ontology];
- studies "things in their natural settings" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 8) which entails "some degree of immersion into [individuals'] lives" (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007, p. 13) and an "intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied"(Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 8)[epistemology];
- explicitly states the values she/he brings to the research [axiology];
- and "tend[s] to embrace the rhetorical assumption that the writing needs to be personal"[rhetoric] (Creswell, 2007, p. 18).

There is no single definition of qualitative research, yet there is a high degree of consensus on its four characteristics: "the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive" (Merriam, 2009, p. 15).

First of all, unlike quantitative research that usually aims at "determining cause and effect, predicting, or describing the distribution of some attribute among a population" qualitative research focuses on "uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5).

The second characteristic of qualitative research is the unique role it attributes to the researcher as the primary and "ideal" instrument of data collection; "ideal" because of his/her ability "to be immediately responsive and adaptive." The researcher, or "human instrument", can further his/her understanding of the phenomenon under study by clarifying materials to the respondents, using both verbal and non-verbal communication, processing data immediately, exploring any unexpected responses and checking for accuracy of interpretation. This privileging of the human instrument, however, does not overlook the shortcomings and biases that a researcher brings to the study and that can have an impact on it. Instead of eliminating them, a researcher acknowledges these biases and monitors their potential impact on data collection and interpretation (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). A qualitative researcher is aware that his/her identity, "life experiences, knowledge, training, emotions, values, attitudes, beliefs, gender, ethnicity, and so forth" do have an influence on several aspects of the research (Saldana, 2011, p. 22). In fact, "[e]xamining the way one's own subjectivity influences one's research is called *reflexivity*, and is a goal of qualitative research." (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 27)

A third feature of qualitative research is its richly descriptive nature and inclusion of "data in the form of quotes from documents, field notes, and participant interviews, excerpts from videotapes, electronic communication, or a combination of these […] in support of the findings of the study"(Merriam, 2009, p. 16).

Qualitative researchers also commonly adopt a flexible research design, spend a significant amount of time in the field, and use non-random, purposeful sampling strategies and a small sample size in comparison to the "larger, more random sampling in quantitative research" (Merriam, 2009, pp. 16-17).

## 4.4 Sampling

Robinson (2004) identified four steps inherent to sampling procedures: "(1) setting a sample universe, (2) selecting a sample size, (3) devising a sample strategy and (4) sample sourcing" (p. 25). Analogous to Robinson's four steps, this section is divided into four sub-sections that explain the sampling strategy used in this study.

**4.4.1 Sample universe.** Initially, this research aimed to study freshman students in two foreign universities in Egypt; the American University in Cairo (AUC), the university where the study was eventually conducted, and another foreign university whose administration rejected my research request after an initial acceptance, without providing reasons for their decision. I did not anticipate that rejection because I was one of the first three founding members of its English department, and had worked in it for eight years before moving to the AUC. Although I experienced frustration and panic as an initial reaction to this rejection, when I started collecting and transcribing data I realized that including students from that university could have compromised the rigour and depth of the study and made the research task practically impossible given the limited time frame and resources available for it. My sample universe was thus limited to AUC's Egyptian freshman students.

Participation in this study was voluntary and consequently raises the issue of self-selection bias, which means "that individuals who consent to be involved in interviews may be different to those who do not, in ways that are not related to sampling criteria" (Robinson, 2014, p. 35). It is not possible to sidestep this bias "in interview-based research, as voluntary participation is central to ethical good practice, therefore all a researcher can do is be aware of

the possibility for bias and consider its possible impact on findings and generalizability" (Robinson, 2014, p. 36).

**4.4.2 Sample strategy.** The qualitative nature of this study makes probabilistic sampling unjustifiable because "generalization in a statistical sense" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77) is not one of its goals. It thus uses non-probabilistic sampling methods, more specifically purposive-also called purposeful- sampling, a sampling technique that "is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned"(Merriam, 2009, p.77); in other words a sample made of information-rich cases "from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling" (Patton, 2002, as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 77).

Purposive sampling identifies key criteria in the target population, and then chooses a sample that displays those criteria. Each of the criteria should have enough diversity within it to allow for a full exploration of potential differences in the behaviours and attitudes of participants that represent it (Bowers, House, & Owens, 2011, p. 78). The subjects within this "maximum variation" or heterogeneous sample are "chosen with the purpose of ensuring that they collectively represent as wide a range as possible of variation in the factors considered relevant to the object of the study" (Bowers et al., 2011, p. 57). Maximum variation sampling allows a researcher to collect two data types: “first detailed descriptions of the uniqueness of the cases, and secondly the shared patterns that cut across cases" (Emmel, 2013, p. 38).

I used a type of purposive sampling, "quota sampling", that "ensures that key groups are represented in the sample, while providing flexibility in the final

sample composition, thus making it an easier job for recruitment than the more exacting approaches of stratified and cell sampling" (Robinson, 2014, p. 34); "[i]nstead of requiring fixed numbers of cases in particular categories, quota sampling sets out a series of categories and a minimum number of cases required for each one" (Robinson, 2014, pp. 33-34) .

Besides being Egyptian and a freshman student at the AUC, the other key criteria that I assumed to be meaningful and should be purposefully included in my final sample are educational, socio-economic, and religious criteria. Having been a member of the AUC community in my capacity as a Rhetoric and Composition Instructor for three years at the time of sample selection, I was familiar, to some extent, with the different groups and categories of students that make AUC's student community. This, in addition to reading the literature on education in Egypt and on identity formation, informed my choice of what I assumed to be key criteria. What follows is an explanation of these criteria and my reasons for judging them to be meaningful for my study.

*1) Educational background*: Egyptian students who join AUC come from various educational backgrounds that can be grouped into two major categories; *thanaweya amma* (the Egyptian high school diploma) and international diplomas, mainly American, British, French, German, Canadian, and IB (International Baccalaureate). The educational background of the students is a potentially important factor in their national, religious, and language identity construction (Sakr, 1997) both prior to and after joining the AUC. Based on my personal experience and observations, the type of education students get at school usually determines their Arabic and English language proficiency levels and their degree of exposure to Western culture and values both at school (for instance, Western curricula and teachers) and at

home (School choice indicates the socio-economic class, which in Egypt is usually indicative of and correlated to the degree of exposure to Western culture and foreign languages).

2) The *socio-economic background* is equally important because it determines the type of school education they get, the extent of exposure to the English and Arabic languages, and the degree of exposure to Western culture at home (language used at home; travelling abroad for family vacations) and in the community (big cities like Cairo and Alexandria as opposed to smaller towns in the Delta or Upper Egypt).

3) The third criterion is the *religious background*. Religiosity or lack thereof as well as religious affiliation can determine how the students negotiate and construct their religious identity. Muslim and Christian students may face different challenges to their religious and linguistic identities, and may perceive those challenges differently. Christian students, even conservative ones, are probably less likely to face challenges related to their religious practices or beliefs as a result of exposure to Western culture, compared to, for example, some Muslim students who follow a strict religious lifestyle (dress code, gender segregation, not shaking hands with the opposite sex). Furthermore, because of the sacred status assigned to the Arabic language by many Muslims, as the language of Quran, threats to language identity may be perceived differently by Christian, Muslim, highly religious, unreligious, and atheist students.

**4.4.3 Sample size.** As explained earlier, qualitative research typically uses non-probability sampling because it aims at understanding a given topic in-depth and producing information-rich data, not generalizing its findings (Higginbottom, 2004, p. 14). Therefore, qualitative researchers are not interested in large generalizable samples; they are "more interested in the

selection of a possibly limited number of information-rich participants. […] Such participants, though, may not be typical of the wider population which is not as important if generalisability is not a priority" (Bowers et al., 2011, p. 56). Bowers et al. (2011) set forth four arguments for recruiting a small sample that are dictated by the nature and aims of qualitative research. First of all, qualitative researchers usually choose information-rich subjects that they think will provide a lot of information about the topic of investigation. Second, they "are not trying to measure prevalence". Third, the data collection methods they use, mainly interviewing, require a great amount of time and resources. Fourth, they will reach a "saturation or data redundancy point" (p. 78).

Qualitative interviewing "distinguishes itself by its ability to get close to people's lives, not by including a huge number of participants" (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 59). As a matter of fact, using small samples in qualitative research is justified and even necessary to achieve a qualitative study's objectives for "[o]ne cannot get close to the lives of 50 or 100 people in an interview study. If, for some reason, such a large number of participants is needed, a survey would possibly have been better and more economical" (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 59). Moreover, if a researcher uses 50 participants without reporting all of their voices, the reader is justified in becoming sceptical about the other participants whose voices were not reported and in asking: "Did their words not matter to the researcher?" (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 59).

There is no agreed upon answer in the literature as to the "perfect" number of participants in qualitative interviews. Edwards and Holland (2013) point out the wide range of recommendations in the literature provided "to guide those who are desperate" for a number:

> between 12 and 60, with a mean of 30 (Adler and Adler); 20 for masters and 50 for doctoral theses (Ragin). Other examples of recommendations

> regarding how many interviews to conduct are Greg Guest and colleagues' (2006) argument that data theme saturation is achieved after 12 interviews, and Janice Morse's (1994) recommendation of a sample of 6 for phenomenological studies and 30–50 for grounded studies. (p. 66)

Kvale and Brinkmann (2008) argued that "the only logical answer to the question 'How many interviews should I conduct?' is: 'Interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know'" (as cited in Brinkmann, 2013, p. 58), viz. reaching data saturation. However, saturation differs from one study and one researcher to another. Moreover "practical exigencies of time, money, and other resources also play a role [in the sample size], especially in doctoral research" (Seidman, 1991, p. 45).

Taking both these exigencies and my research purpose into consideration, I decided to follow Brinkmann's "rule of thumb" that "interview studies tend to have around 15 participants, which is a number that makes possible a practical handling of the data (although 15 interviews of 20 transcribed pages equals 300 pages to be analyzed, which is quite a bit)" (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 59). But, because my study is longitudinal and involves conducting three rounds of interviews with each participant, I only included 12 participants and decided to recruit more if saturation is not reached. However, although three students opted out of the study, two after the first round of interviews and one after the second round, I decided not to include more participants because thematic saturation was reached and also because of practical exigencies of time and resources.

**4.4.4 Sample sourcing.** When a researcher determines the sample universe, number, and strategy, it is then time "to go and source the participants

from the real world" (Robinson, 2014, p. 35). Since my research goal is to understand how AUC students construct and negotiate their national, religious, and linguistic identities, it was important to first understand the kinds of identities they come to AUC with, and to trace the changes their identities go through from the gate. For this purpose, I administered a survey during the First Year Experience Programme (FYE) that took place during the week before the beginning of the "Fall 2012" semester. The FYE is a four-day programme that takes place on AUC's campus a week prior to the beginning of each Fall and Spring semesters in order to initiate freshman students to diverse aspects of the university's academic and social life. The survey was designed on the one hand for the purpose of recruiting participants who display the key criteria identified earlier and to explore other criteria that might be included, but on the other hand to further explore the field. The survey was written in English and explored the students' (the undergraduate cohort that joined AUC in Fall 2012) educational and social backgrounds, the languages they speak, their national feelings, their self-defined religiosity, as well as their media preferences.

Six of the faculty facilitating the FYE and I administered the survey to our FYE groups, seven out of 54 FYE groups,16 to 18 students each. I briefed my six colleagues about the purpose of the survey and requested them to explain it to the students and to stress that participation is voluntary. I also instructed them to explain difficult words if needed, but in a way that would not lead the students to any specific answer. All students in the seven groups, 113 in total, took the survey. The survey consent form requested students to provide their email addresses if they did not mind being contacted by the researcher. Copies of the consent forms and the data collection instruments are attached in Appendices A and B respectively. Of the 93 students who provided their email

addresses, I contacted 20 students requesting them to participate in my study. I tried to contact students with different educational, linguistic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds. At this stage the only exclusion criteria were being a non-Egyptian national and/or a non-freshman student.

Unfortunately, only two students responded to my follow-up emails. One possible reason for the very low response rate could be that the students were overwhelmed with adjusting to university life and attending to numerous tasks during the first few weeks of their very first semester at the university, and perhaps would have agreed to participate had I sent them a second or third request. Several studies about participant recruitment and retention found that one of the key factors that affect the decision to take part in a study is time availability (Kolar & Kolar, 2008; Clark, 2010). They also contended that refusal to participate can sometimes be only circumstantial. Navartil et al. (1994) called these cases "turn-arounds" and believed that "approaching the participant the following year may yield favourable results" (as cited in Cotter, Burke, Loeber, & Navatil, 2002, pp. 496-497). Therefore, in hindsight I realize that I should have emailed my study request to a much larger number than I did, and should have sent them a second request a few weeks later when they were more accustomed to the university. Another reason for this very low response rate could have been that many freshman students do not check their AUC email frequently as I came to learn later from my own students. A further reason might have been their lack of interest in the topic (Kolar & Kolar, 2008, p. 372; Albaum & Smith, 2012, p. 189) or their perceived inability to give adequate responses to my interview questions (Kolar & Kolar, 2008, p. 372).

Since sending emails did not prove successful in recruiting participants, I resorted to a more convenient sampling method by getting help from one of the

six colleagues who administered the FYE survey, and from the freshman students I taught that semester. My colleague asked two male students from her FYE group if they would be interested in participating in my study, and both students agreed that I contact them and eventually volunteered to take part in this study. I also recruited one female student from my FYE group when I met them for the fourth FYE session in October and seven students from the three classes I was teaching in that semester; six females and one male. The last female participant I recruited was recommended by another female participant. Hence, I ended up with 12 participants; however, two female students (Hala and Nardine) withdrew from the study after the first round of interviews and one male student (Khaled) after the second round. Thus, only nine students continued till the end of the study.

Besides time availability and interest in the topic that could have been the reason behind these three students' withdrawal, the literature presents other factors that can affect participants' motivation and willingness to continue taking part in a study. Participants "are not entirely without power. They can refuse to take part in an experiment, or they can leave" (Cassell, 1978, p. 135); they come to the study with their own expectations and when their expectations are not met, they may decide to withdraw from it. In their study of participants who previously refused to take part in a study, Kolar and Kolar (2008) report several expectations that participants in their study "mentioned in relation to dis/satisfying experiences", namely deception, kindness, im/personal treatment, rapport, courtesy, and even the interviewer's pleasant voice (p. 373). Consequently, they recommend that researchers "take some time and first query respondents' expectations and motives in the beginning of the interview"

(Kolar & Kolar, 2008, p. 379), which is something I was not aware of at the time and unfortunately did not do.

Some possible reasons for Khaled's withdrawal could be that my questions did not seem sufficiently challenging for him. Khaled likes challenges; for example, he finished the IG programme in two years instead of four. He also told me during one of his interviews that he liked to leave a mark wherever he went. Participating in the study was perhaps not perceived by him as an opportunity to leave such a mark. As to the other two students who withdrew from the study and who were my students, one of them could have done so because of her dissatisfaction with a grade she got on her final paper in my course. After being given a chance to modify a previous draft that included quite a high percentage of invalid paraphrases, she failed to make all the necessary changes. Then when the paper was graded, she emailed me to request yet another chance to submit another draft. I rejected her request since it was against the class policies stated on the course syllabus. When I contacted her the following semester for a second interview, she did not reply to my email even when I sent a second email stating: "Could you please confirm receiving my previous email? If you wish to withdraw from the study, there's no problem at all. Just let me know whether you're still willing to participate or not." Not replying to my emails and opting out of the study was perhaps her way of expressing her dissatisfaction with her grade and her anger about my refusal to give her an unfair advantage over her classmates.

Among the 12 participants in this study, only those who had not already taken the survey in their FYE class were asked to answer the survey questions before the interviews to determine if they met the selection criteria. Table 4 summarizes the 12 participants' demographic details (Age, gender, religion,

nationality, governorate, and educational background). A more detailed description is given at the beginning of the results chapter.

Despite my attempts to include a wide range of diversity within each of the key criteria, I was not always able to do so. For example, none of my sample came from marginalized governorates. Another issue is related to the high number of females compared to the males (8 females; 4 males). Finally, many of the interviewed students were highly motivated individuals and hard-working students, as I came to know after interviewing them.

*Table 4*

*Interviewees' Demographic Details.*

| **Name** | **Gender** | **Age** | **Religion** | **Nationality** | **Place of residence before AUC** | **Educational background** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alia | F | 19 | Muslim | Egyptian | Cairo | German Abitur |
| Aya | F | 20 | Muslim | Egyptian | Cairo | *Thanaweyya amma* (LEAD scholarship) |
| Elham | F | 18 | Muslim | Egyptian | Alexandria | *Thanaweyya amma*(LEAD scholarship) |
| Hala | F | 17 | Muslim | Egyptian | Cairo | IGCSE |
| Heba | F | 18 | Muslim | Egyptian | Cairo | American Diploma |
| Khaled | M | 18 | Muslim | Egyptian | KSA (lived in KSA last 3 years) | IGCSE |
| Marina | F | 18 | Christian | Egyptian | Kuwait (born & lived in Kuwait) | IGCSE |
| Mahmoud | M | 17 | Muslim | American/ Egyptian | Cairo (Born & lived in US till age 11) | American Diploma |
| Mona | F | 18 | Muslim | Egyptian | KSA (born & lived in KSA; came back to Egypt 3 years ago) | American Diploma |
| Mostafa | M | 18 | Muslim | Egyptian | Cairo | IGCSE |
| Nardine | F | 19 | Christian | American/ Egyptian | Cairo | American Diploma |
| Yassin | M | 18 | Muslim | Canadian/ Egyptian | KSA (born & lived in Canada till age 10; lived in Egypt then KSA) | IGCSE |

## 4.5 Data Collecting Methods

The major data collection instrument used in this study is individual in-depth interviewing. However, I also used an alternative lens, namely the focus group.

**4.5.1 Semi-structured qualitative interviews.** Maccoby and Maccoby (1954) define the interview as "a face-to-face verbal exchange, in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons" (as cited in Brinkmann, 2013, pp. 1-2). Although there are other methods that can be relied upon to tap into people's experiences such as reviewing the literature, examining documents, observing phenomena, or administering questionnaires, "interviewing has a certain primacy among the different methods" (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 47) and "provides a necessary, if not always completely sufficient, avenue of inquiry"(Seidman, 1991, p. 4), particularly when a researcher's goal is understanding how people make meaning of their experiences, in which case "restricting data to measurable variables is unnecessarily limiting. The qualitative research paradigm assumes that the best way to learn about people's subjective experience is to ask them about it, and then listen carefully to what they say" (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 23).

In addition, "[a]s a method of inquiry, interviewing is the most consistent with people's ability to make meaning through language. It affirms the importance of the individual without denigrating the possibility of community and collaboration. Finally, it is deeply satisfying to researchers who are interested in others' stories" (Seidman, 1991, p. 7).

Silverman (2013) questions interviewing as a method of inquiry and calls for using observation to investigate phenomena because observation gives the researcher access to "naturally occurring data" as opposed to the "manufactured" data that interviews yield. He claims that "such direct questions will influence what people say and are not usually a useful way to investigate a phenomenon" (pp. 54-55). However, the term "naturally" in "naturally occurring data" is problematic because the presence of an observer/researcher could also influence how people behave. Silverman himself admits that the real issue goes beyond the simple natural/manufactured polarity to the potential influence that data collection methods might have on data reliability, or what he refers to as "procedural consequentiality". Researchers are thus required to demonstrate awareness of "the extent to which their findings may simply be an artefact of their chosen method [and] a concern to overcome 'procedural consequentiality" (Silverman, 2013, p. 54).

Among the three major types of interviews- structured, unstructured, and semi-structured- I chose the latter type. Semi-structured interviews have enough structure (a general topic guide) to stay on topic and answer the research questions, yet are flexible enough to permit the researcher to explore new directions that might arise during an interview, and to focus "on issues that he or she deems important in relation to the research project" (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 21).The interview guide I used included four broad categories of questions (general questions, national identity, religious identity, linguistic identity) followed by probes to allow "each respondent to move into uncharted territory, and have their particular line of thought pursued" (Marks & Yardley, 2004a, p. 41). While the broad questions were the same for all participants,

they were not necessarily asked in the same order, nor were the probes necessarily the same for each participant.

It is, in fact, this balance between flexibility and structure, and the quality of the data they produce that makes semi-structure interviews "the most important way of conducting a research interview" (Gillham, 2005, p. 70). Brinkmann (2013) argued that semi-structured interviews are better than their structured and unstructured cousins not only because their flexibility allows the researcher to follow up on any directions s/he judges important, but also because they "give the interviewer a greater chance of becoming visible as a knowledge-producing participant in the process itself, rather than hiding behind a preset interview guide"(p. 21). Besides, "[r]esponses to open-ended questions reflect an individual's personal reaction to the phenomenon under investigation, rather than one elicited by way of a forced choice between predefined options" (Marks & Yardley, 2004a, p. 41).

Another important decision in using interviews was related to the language in which they were to be conducted. For mainly pragmatic reasons listed below, and after consulting with my first and second supervisors and with a colleague, I decided that unless it affects my results or the authenticity of the data, I would conduct the interviews in English yet give the interviewees the choice to conduct it in Arabic instead or to switch to Arabic whenever they wished to do so. My reasons for conducting the interviews in English were as follows:

1. The minimum required IELTS score to be admitted at the AUC is 5. Most students at the AUC are very comfortable speaking in English; in fact,

many of them have almost native fluency and some are more comfortable speaking in English than in Arabic.

2. Not knowing that I could use bilingual data (which I only knew from my current PhD supervisors to whom I was assigned after I began my data analysis), I thought that I had to translate the Arabic interviews into English. So, I decided that using English instead of Arabic would save me a lot of time that would be spent on translating from Arabic to English.
3. I was also concerned about whether my translation as a non-professional translator would be a faithful rendition of the original text.
4. Despite having acquired the Egyptian citizenship and having lived in Egypt for thirteen years at the time of collecting data, and despite speaking ECA fluently, I still spoke it with a non-Egyptian accent which usually led people to ask me if I were Egyptian or not. Since part of the research was about national identity, I thought it better if participants did not know from the start that I am not an Egyptian. So, I used English instead of ECA.

After writing a draft topic guide for the interview and getting feedback on it from my thesis supervisor, I tried it out with four students from the other university I was supposed to collect data from (They had not yet rejected my proposal at that stage) and three of my AUC students from the previous semester (Fall 2010). These were all freshman students in either their first or second semesters. Gillham (2005) explained that regardless of "the end product, there is much to be learnt from a trialling interview with the kind of people who will be involved in the actual research. Initial trials need involve only a very few people: two or three is probably quite enough"(p. 22). During the initial trials, I asked the interviewees for critical feedback on the interview guide

and made amendments accordingly. Amendments included adding some questions, rephrasing others to make them more "sayable" and deleting redundant questions.

After making amendments, I conducted the pilot interviews with five volunteer AUC students who were very similar to my final sample. I "brief[ed] them as to the purpose of the exercise and ask[ed] them to make any comments they see fit; and ensur[ed] that, apart from this, all aspects of the interview are as they are intended to be in the main study" (Gillham, 2005, p. 74). The pilot interviews were longer than the trials; almost one hour long instead of 30 minutes.

"This first brush with reality" was an eye opener that taught me several lessons:

- what seems to make questions work – productive and stimulating (or the reverse);
- the ‘feel’ of the interviewing process, particularly important if you are inexperienced;
- a sense of those elements which give an interview its characteristic tone and set the direction. (Gillham, 2005. p. 23)

Conducting these practice-interviews has caused a perspective shift for me and forced me to see the AUC from the students' perspective. I also experienced first-hand how conversations with different interviewees produced different interviews; a researcher cannot ask the exact same questions in the exact same order to two different participants. I have learned to explore new paths when they emerge. I was amazed and delighted by how total strangers were willing to confide to me stories about their personal lives, which reassured me that I came across as a trustworthy person to them. I have also become aware

of and examined my own hidden prejudices; for example, I did not expect one of the students to have memorized several parts of the Quran as a child and to have excellent Standard Arabic as a result. The students talked to me about their lives, hopes, and worries, and I suddenly saw them as very unique young people and became fond of their stories, and consequently came to appreciate their uniqueness.

On the other hand, as I continued to conduct interviews, rapport with my own students who were not taking part in the study improved dramatically. Prior to the interviews, I often came across as a very strict teacher; my relationship with the students was a very formal one with very little room for personal conversations unrelated to our teacher-student relationship. I had the wrong belief and fear that students would abuse any digression from formal conversations and transgress the boundaries of respect. Moreover, At the time of data collection, I was undergoing extremely challenging life events and found it hard to admit my vulnerability. I dreaded opening up to others, including students, as a potential threat that could unveil my hidden vulnerability. However, as the participants opened up to me, shared their own vulnerabilities, and sometimes asked me personal questions, they pushed me outside my comfort zone and inadvertently helped me acknowledge and accept my own vulnerability, and thus I began to let go of that strict mask I was wearing to protect my vulnerable self. The rapport I established with them proved very helpful for the conduct of the interviews.

Another experience worth mentioning, from which I learned about interviews from the participants' perspective, was my volunteering for a one-time qualitative interview by a previous colleague who was also studying for a

PhD in education. This experience provided me with a unique chance to experience the anxieties and expectations that a participant might feel and to recognize some of the pitfalls that an interviewer might face.

After this practice stage, I began interviewing my research participants. I conducted three rounds of interviews, whereby each student was interviewed three times during his/her first academic year; at the very beginning, halfway through and at the very end of the academic year. The reason for this longitudinal design was to follow up the students' trajectories as they got accustomed to university life, to capture the process of construction and negotiation of their identities, and to listen to their stories as they experienced them.

All interviews, except one interview with Mona who preferred to meet me in a public place in her neighbourhood, were conducted on campus, at a time most suitable for the students. The first round of interviews was conducted outdoors in different places on campus for fear that conducting them in my office could place me in a power position, but my fears were proven unfounded. In fact, it was counterproductive to conduct the interviews outdoors and several participants expressed their satisfaction when I started conducting the interviews in my office because of the comfort, quietness, and privacy it offered as opposed to the heat and disturbances that we sometimes faced outdoors. Thus, the second and third rounds of interviews were conducted in my office.

With consent from the participants, all interviews were audio-taped in order to make both the interviewing process and the data analysis easier. "During the interview, recording the interview means that qualitative interviewers can focus on listening, probing and following up (see later) and

maintaining eye contact with their interviewee" (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 69). And after the interview, it has allowed me to have access to other clues such as intonation, laughter, and tone.

**4.5.2 Focus group**. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) define a focus group as any group discussion in which "the researcher is actively encouraging of, and attentive to, the group interaction" (as cited in Barbour, 2007, p. 3). Focus groups, originally called "focused interviews" were first used in the aftermath of World War II by Lazarsfeld, Merton and colleagues “at the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University to test the reactions to propaganda and radio broadcasts during the Second World War" (Barbour, 2007, pp. 2-6). They are unique in giving researchers an insight "into public discourses (Kitzinger, 1994) and the views expressed in focus groups may, of course, be different from the ‘private’ views that would be expressed in one-to-one interviews (Smithson, 2000)" (Barbour, 2007, p. 9).

Focus groups are a tool for producing parallel datasets to individual interviews that may or may not differ from the data gotten from one-on-one interviews. However, when qualitative researchers encounter different or even contradictory findings in parallel datasets, they do not agonize over them. Instead, these contradictions become a resource themselves, and researchers try to understand the reasons behind them (Barbour, 2007, p. 9). This "approach allows the researcher to capitalize on the comparative potential of various datasets, rather than being caught up in attempts to establish a hierarchy of evidence" (Barbour, 2007, pp. 8-9). It is this approach that instigated my decision to use yet another lens, a focus group, to collect more data. I prefer to use the term 'crystalization' instead of "triangulation' to describe

the use of different lenses because it "emphasizes the value of looking simultaneously at the same issue or concept from a variety of different angles" (Barbour, 2007, p. 9).

At the end of the third and last interview, I briefed the participants about the focus group, solicited their involvement in it, and asked if they would prefer a virtual or a face-to-face one. All of them agreed to participate in a face-to-face focus group. Before conducting this focus group, I piloted it with three volunteer female students from three different classes of mine. I reserved a small study room in the AUC library during assembly hour when none of them had classes. The discussion raised interesting viewpoints and shed light on individual experiences. It also allowed me to examine and modify my moderating techniques. I realized that I got very much involved in the discussion, so much so that I occasionally interrupted participants, overlooked opportunities for further elaboration, or did not follow up on some new threads. I tried to avoid these mistakes in the actual focus group and to only interfere when necessary to clarify a question or to ensure that all participants take part in the discussion.

Only five students came to the focus group, two males and three females, which is a very close number to the standard "six to ten participants" recommended by Chrzanowska (2002) (as cited in Brinkmann, 2013, p. 26). In fact some "qualitative researchers have also experimented with groups of only two participants (sometimes referred to as ‘the two-person interview,’ although there are literally three people if the interviewer is counted), mainly because it makes the research process easier to handle than with larger groups, where people often will not show up" (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 26).

I also reserved a small study room in the library that had a table around which the participants and I sat because "the group members should be seated in a manner that provides maximum opportunity for eye contact with both the moderator and other group members"(Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007, p. 90). I distributed the focus group consent form to the participants to read and sign, and reminded them that the discussion would be audio-taped. Then I explained how a focus group works and asked them to introduce themselves in order to build some rapport within the group. Stewart et al. (2007) recommend that "group members introduce themselves and tell a little about themselves, such as their work, their families, or other nonintimate personal facts" (p. 97). I then asked if anyone would like to facilitate the discussion, and Mahmoud volunteered to take on this role.

I used flash cards with questions or statements to probe the discussion and maintain some structure because "[a] certain amount of direction and structure is useful for moving the discussion along, for controlling dominant group members, and for drawing out reticent respondents" (Stewart et al.,2007, p. 92). Each of the statements and questions was typed on a flashcard preceded by "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?" The students discussed them one by one in the following order:

**National identity**

1. It is hard to be a "real" Egyptian at AUC
2. There are enough opportunities at AUC that nurture the students' national identity
3. Being an AUC student helps build an Egyptian citizen proud of his/her country and culture
4. A student's background determines how the AUC experience affects his/her national identity construction.

**Religious identity**

1. It is hard to be a good Muslim/Christian at AUC

2. Being an AUC student helps build a Muslim/Christian proud of his religion
3. There are enough opportunities at AUC that nurture my religious identity development
4. A student's background determines how the AUC experience affects his/her religious identity construction.

**Language identity**

1. There are enough opportunities at AUC that nurture the students' linguistic identities.
2. Being an AUC student helps build a person proud of the Arabic language.
3. It is hard for AUC students to preserve their linguistic identities (Be it related to English, Arabic, or another language).
4. A student's background determines how the AUC experience affects his/her linguistic identity construction.
5. Generally speaking, AUC students use more English than Arabic.

**Other perspectives:**

1. What should AUC add to make you able to live your linguistic identity fully?
2. What should AUC add to make you able to live your religious identity fully?
3. What should AUC add to make you able to live your national identity fully?

The focus group discussion lasted 50 minutes. At the end, I debriefed the discussion and thanked the students for their participation.

The final data set consisted of 31 interview transcripts, and 1 focus group transcript:

*Table 5*

*Final Data Set*

| Data source | Interviews Round 1 | Interviews Round 2 | Interviews Round 3 | Focus Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number | 12 transcripts/ 12 interviewees | 10 transcripts/ 10 interviewees | 9 transcripts/ 9 interviewees | 1 transcript/ 5 participants |

## 4.6 Ethical Issues

**4.6.1 Ethical measures.** Before collecting data, I got AUC's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and Exeter's ethical research approval (A copy of each is attached in Appendix C) Participants in this study were informed about the purpose of the study both when first contacted via email (a copy of one of these emails is attached in Appendix D and asked to participate in the study, and on the consent forms they read and signed at the beginning of their first interviews and before the focus group that was decided at a later stage of the study.

Both consent forms, a copy of each is attached, informed the students that:

- there is no compulsion for them to participate in this research project and that they may choose to withdraw their participation at any stage without any consequences
    - any information they share with the researcher during the interviews or in the group discussion with other focus group members will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications
    - If applicable, the information, which they give, will be shared with the supervisor in an anonymised form
    - all information they give will be treated as confidential
    - the researcher will make every effort to preserve their anonymity

The participants were given a copy of these consent forms and were reminded at later stages of their rights as participants. All participants must be well informed about the study's aims and voluntary nature and must be guaranteed anonymity and enlightened about what their participation entails in order for them to make an informed decision regarding participation in the study

(Robinson, 2014, p. 35). They were also reassured that they have the right to refuse answering any question that they do not wish to answer.

Gillham (2005) stated that "an experienced interviewer who creates the conditions for, and facilitates disclosures has a responsibility to the interviewee for how the material is stored (if it is), analysed and used" (p. 10). To guarantee confidentiality and anonymity, the surveys and the consent forms have been locked in a closet in my office and all interviews and focus group audio files and transcriptions have been saved on my laptop and backed up on an external drive; both have a password and are not used by anyone but myself. I also removed the participants' names from the transcripts and used pseudonyms instead.

All participants were sent a copy of their transcribed interviews in order to remind them of what they said and to give them the chance to make an informed decision about whether they would like the information they have shared to be used in the study or not since one can sometimes divulge information that one later regrets. So, although "[i]t is rare that what is said in a research interview ever approaches such a sensational character […], interviews are a form of record and it may be that an interviewee is left with a feeling that they have been unfair, or inaccurate, or indiscreet, […] it is a matter of courtesy that they have been given the chance" to check their interview transcripts (Gillham, 2005, p. 14).

**4.6.2 Recruiting my own students.** When teachers wear the researcher's hat and use their own students as participants, "the potential for conflict between priorities is very real" (Hammack, 1997, p. 257). Therefore, they have to take all necessary measures in order for this dual role not to harm or disadvantage their students due to the dependent relationship they have with

them that makes them vulnerable "captive participants". This vulnerability may become a coercive element that affects their ability to make a truly voluntary consent (Ferguson, Yonge, & Myrick, 2004, p. 58). So, "if their tutor asks them to complete a questionnaire or take part in an interview, it may be difficult for them to say ‘no’. It is the researcher’s responsibility to be aware of this, make the freedom of choice clear, and MEAN IT!"(Gillham, 2005, p. 15). This pressure to take part in their teacher’s study might be the result of mere perception on the part of the students because “[t]hese fears generally arise from the inherent power relationships between learners and their educators […]. At best, student motivation to participate might be related to a desire to please faculty with whom they have positive relationships" (Ferguson et al., 2004, pp. 59-60).

Ferguson et al. (2004) argued that this dual role can affect the trust on which the fiduciary relationship that exists between students and their teachers depends. Students rightly assume "that they are entering into a social contract with their teachers, that their teachers are committed to their learning, and that their teachers will not have conflicting loyalties or elements of self-interest in the relationship (Lemmens & Singer, 1998; Miller, Rosenstein, & DeRenzo, 1998)" (p. 58). Yet, "[w]hen teachers engage their students as participants in research studies, they assume double agency (Edwards & Chalmers, 2002) or divided loyalties (Bell & Nutt, 2002) with their students and might experience conflicts of interest and threats to ethical principles in the relationship (Lemmens & Singer,1998)" (Ferguson et al., 2004, p. 59). This is turn may affect the research results; "[s]ocial desirability bias might be evident in some situations in which students feel compelled or coerced to participate but protect their privacy by providing false or incomplete information to comply with the researcher’s

goals" (Ferguson et al., 2004, p. 61). They might also provide data that they think their teachers would like to hear (Ferguson et al., 2004, p. 65).

My research was not classroom research. As such there was hardly any conflict or ambiguity between my roles as teacher and researcher. The participants who were my students were repeatedly reminded that they would not gain any benefits in the course as a result of participating nor bear any negative consequences in case of both participation and withdrawal. My students for only one semester could have dropped after the first semester, yet only two of them dropped while five remained.

## 4.7 Data Analysis

I used qualitative analysis to analyse the data collected during the interviews and the focus group. I specifically used thematic analysis which **"**is a process of making explicit the structures and meanings that the participant or reader embodies in a text" (Gavin, 2008, p. 277), and "involves the searching across a data set -be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts-to find repeated patterns of meaning" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86).

Although thematic analysis can be done using either hard copies of the interview transcripts or soft copies on a word-processing program, those two methods would be very much time-consuming, and most importantly, would cut the selected text segments out of their context (Marks & Yardley, 2004b, p. 64). Therefore, I opted for NVivo software to facilitate the management and analysis of my qualitative data. Patton (1987) summarizes the numerous advantages of using NVivo as follows:

> NVivo […] combines efficient management of non-numerical, unstructured data with powerful processes of indexing, searching, and

> theorizing. Designed for researchers making sense of complex data, NVivo offers a complete toolkit for rapid coding, thorough exploration, and rigorous management and analysis. Especially valuable is the ability of the program to create text data matrixes for comparisons. It also provides for visually mapping categories identified in your analysis. (p. 243)

Regardless of the technique used, researchers using thematic analysis usually follow either an inductive (for instance grounded theory) or a deductive approach to identify themes, or what Crabtree & Miller (1999) refer to as the editing and template organizing styles, respectively. An inductive approach is data-driven in the sense that themes emerge from the data "without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions" (Ezzy, 2002, p. 83; Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). In contrast, a deductive approach, also called "a 'theoretical' thematic analysis would tend to be driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area, and is thus more explicitly analyst- driven" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

Marks and Yardley (2004, b), however, argued that "no theme can be entirely inductive or data driven, since the researcher's knowledge and preconceptions will inevitably influence the identification of themes" (p. 58). Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), for example, have use "a hybrid approach of qualitative methods of thematic analysis, and it incorporated both the data-driven inductive approach of Boyatzis (1998) and the deductive a priori template of codes approach outlined by Crabtree and Miller (1999)"(p. 4). My data analysis followed suit in the sense that "existing theories drive the questions one asks and one's understanding of the answers, so that one does not 'reinvent the wheel'" (Marks & Yardley, 2004b, p. 58), yet is being open to unexpected themes that emerge from the data, since "there would be little point

in doing research if one were not simultaneously open to the data and what they might offer anew in terms of the theory's development or refutation" (Marks & Yardley, 2004b, p. 59).

In thematic analysis, "the general issues that are of interest are determined prior to the analysis, [but] the specific nature of the categories and themes to be explored are not predetermined. This means that this form of research may take the researcher into issues and problems he or she had not anticipated"(Ezzy, 2002, p. 88). I agree with Bauer (2000) when he "warns against adopting a purely inductive approach where one codes whatever one observes in the text. Rather, codes need to flow from the principles that underpin the research, and the specific questions one seeks to answer" (as cited in Marks & Yardley, 2004b, p. 59).

Braun and Clarke (2006) name six phases of thematic analysis: familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. This does not mean that the process is a linear one; instead it is a "*recursive"*(p. 86), "iterative and reflexive process" in which the researcher moves back and forth between the different phases of data analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 4). Next is a detailed account of my data analysis process that followed these six phases.

**4.7.1 Data intimacy.** It is very important that a researcher becomes familiar with the data before analysing it. Saldana (2011) explained that

> By reading and rereading the corpus, you gain intimate familiarity with its contents and begin to notice significant details as well as make new insights about their meanings, Patterns, categories, and their

> interrelationships become more evident the more you know the subtleties of the database. (p. 95)

Doing the transcription on my own proved very useful in familiarizing my self with the data. After conducting each interview, I listened to its audio recording and took notes for the subsequent interview, and then I transcribed it while the whole rhetorical situation is still fresh in my mind. I subsequently listened to it a third time to translate any Arabic statements and ensure the transcription's accuracy.

Braun & Clarke (2006) explained that guidelines for producing a transcript vary according to the type and purpose of the analysis and present a set of minimum required criteria:

> at a minimum it requires a rigorous and thorough 'orthographic' transcript-a 'verbatim' account of all verbal (and sometimes nonverbal-eg, coughs) utterances. What is important is that the transcript retains the information you need, from the verbal account, and in a way which is 'true' to its original nature […] and that the transcription convention is practically suited to the purpose of analysis (Edwards, 1993). (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88)

For this research, I did not record silences or body language as I would do in a discourse analysis for instance. I produced a detailed account of all verbal utterances but only some of the non-verbal ones such as laughter or a high excited tone because these could indicate feelings like hesitation, embarrassment or anger.

**4.7.2 Generating codes.** Coding is described by Charmaz (2001) "as the 'critical link' between data collection and their explanation of meaning" (as

cited in Saldana, 2013, p. 3). It is like a staircase that leads the researcher from the lower level of raw text to the highest level of his/her research concerns:

Research Concerns
Theoretical Narrative
Theoretical constructs
Themes
Repeating ideas
Relevant text
Raw text. (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 35)

Coding enabled me to reduce the data and make it manageable by keeping only relevant text "that is related to [my] specific research concerns" (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 37). I highlighted and coded text that answered yes to any of the following questions:

- Does it relate to your research concern?
- Does it help you understand your participants better? Does it clarify your thinking?
- Does it simply seem important, even if you can't say why? (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 48)

Although I knew that some of the coded text might not be directly related to my research question, I still coded it inductively as it might be useful in explaining another more relevant text or could be used in other sections of my research report. For instance, I coded passages related to the interview experience that I thought would help me understand why three students withdrew from the study, why those who stayed did so, and if that has any implications to my findings.

Initially I coded all interviews for three main codes that I labelled as national identity, religious identity and linguistic identity. I looked for any references to Egypt, religion, or language and labelled them accordingly. If a

passage mentioned two or all of the above, I coded it under all relevant labels. At the same time, I was open to emerging codes. For example, Marina's first interview, which is the first interview I coded, referred several times to her family, so I created a node called "family role." Additionally, when a new idea was raised by one or more students but not the others, I would explore it further in the coming interviews with all participants. For instance, some students mentioned the Scientific Thinking and Philosophical Thinking courses either in relation to religious identity or as useless boring courses, but other students did not. This holistic coding helped me "capture a sense of the overall contents and the possible categories that may develop" (Saldana, 2013, p. 264).

When I finished coding all the interviews from round one I had compiled the following working list of codes that I kept refining during subsequent coding cycles:

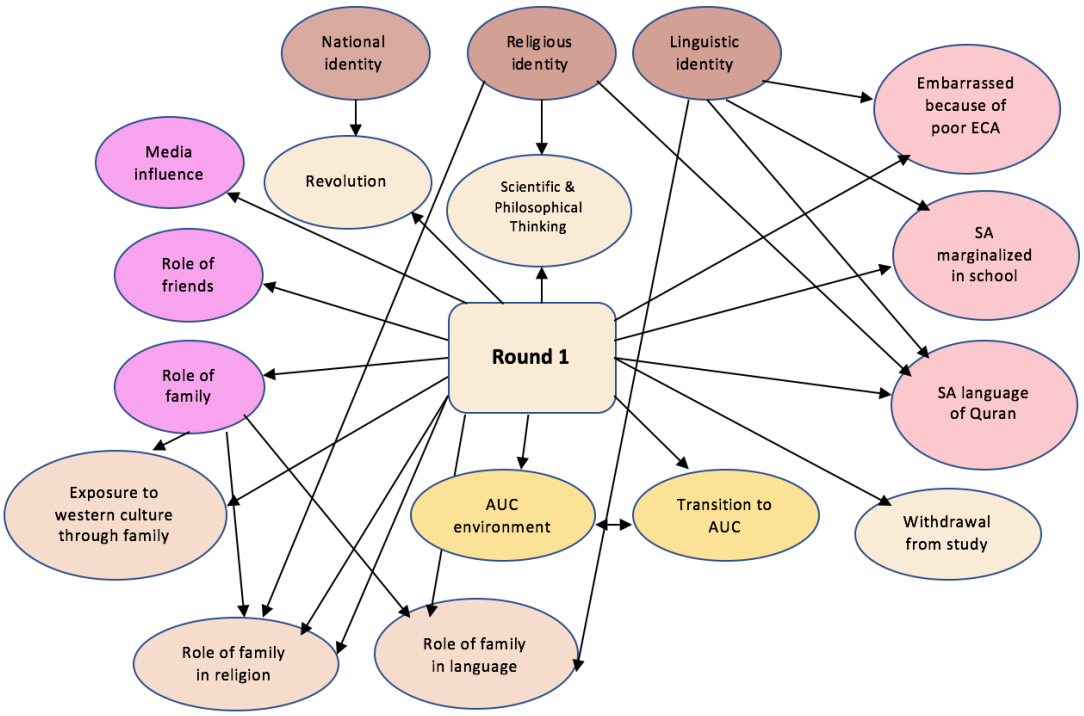


*Figure 2: Round one codes*

For the second and third rounds of interviewing I used both holistic and initial coding methods. After the “holistic coding” that lumped together long passages under one of the major codes, I retrieved as separate files all the passages that were coded under each of the major constructs in my research question: national, religious, and linguistic identity and used “initial coding” which “[b]reaks down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examines them, and compares them for similarities and differences” (Saldana, 2013, p. 265). Some codes were split to create a child node and others were joined together to form a mother node; for example, the “Role of family” node eventually became a child node under “Influencers” that had three other child nodes “Role of friends”, “Media influence” and “Western exposure”. New codes continued to emerge as illustrated in the following figure and were added to the initial coding structure:

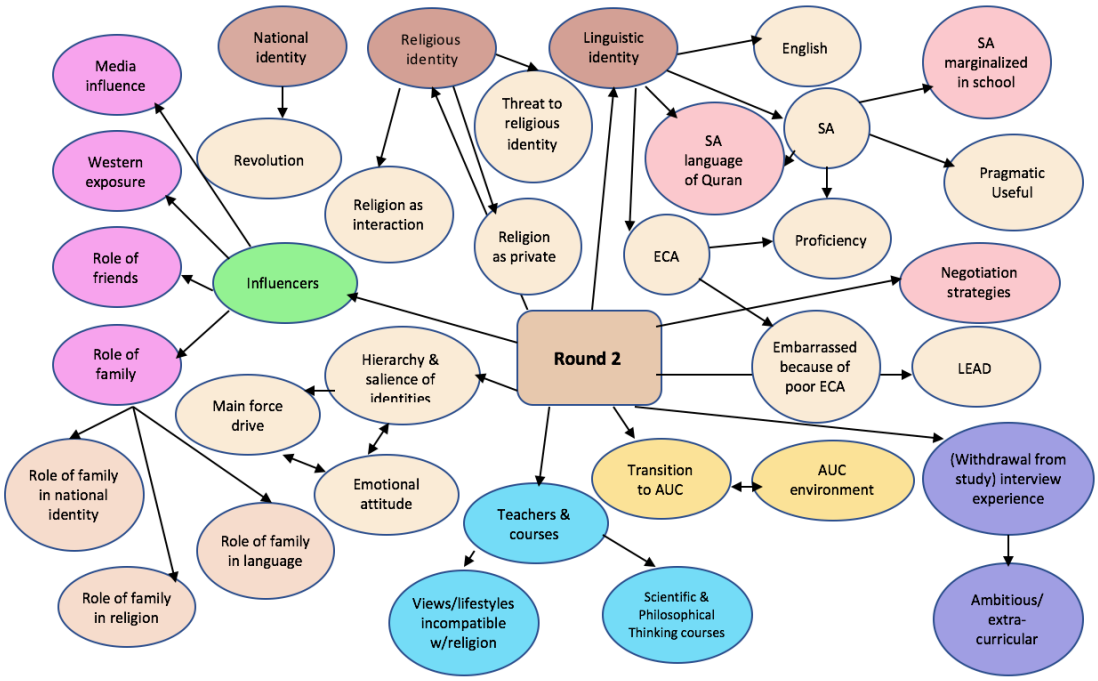


*Figure 3: Round two codes*

After coding round two interviews, I decided to code round three interviews before I go back to round one and recode it in light of the new codes

that emerged from round two, in order to do all recoding at once. However, no major new codes emerged from round three; the few new codes that came up were just a refinement of codes from round two.  Saturation was reached:

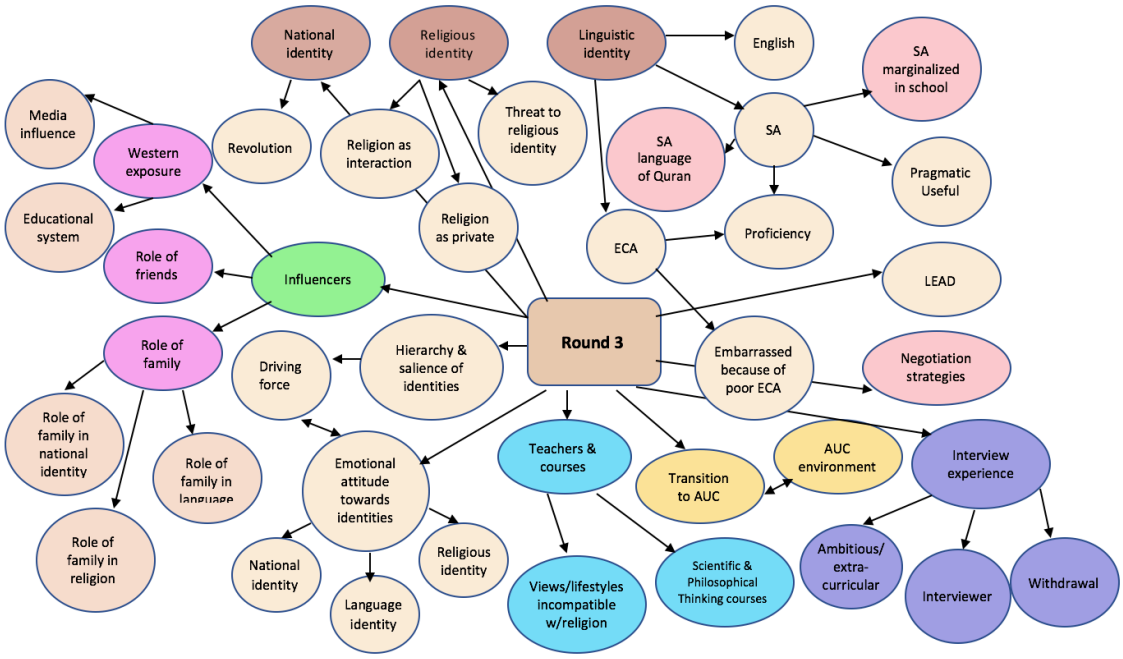


*Figure 4: Round three codes*

After coding all interviews, I coded the focus group that confirmed data saturation. No new codes emerged from the focus group, but one theme came out more clearly, that of individual agency. The focus group also allowed me to verify the major findings from the interviews and to witness some instances of identity negotiation at a smaller scale as some of the participants sometimes disagreed and negotiated their different meanings.

As stated earlier, data analysis phases are not linear; they are iterative. As I coded and recoded the interviews, I was also writing memos and notes about emerging themes.

**4.7.3 Themeing the data.** The search for themes phase "re-focuses the analysis at the broader level of themes, rather than codes, involves sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data

extracts within the identified themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). Marks and Yardley (2004,b) define a theme as

> a specific pattern found in the data in which one is interested. In thematic and content analysis, a theme of a coding category can refer to the manifest content of the data, that is, something directly observable, such as mention of the term ‘stigma’ in a series of transcripts. Alternatively, it may refer to a more latent level, such as talk in which stigma is implicitly referred to. (p. 57)

To refocus the categorization of codes into more general themes, I used my research question as a compass. In other words, I focused on answering my research question without turning a blind eye to other themes. I arranged/ rearranged, named/renamed the themes until the whole argument made sense, until cases that seemed like exceptions at first, were accounted for and made sense.

To avoid being overwhelmed by my data, I looked at one construct at a time before I looked at the interaction of all three constructs. I looked at repeating ideas and organized them under broader themes. Then I looked at how those constructs are interconnected in order to develop “an argument, or central story, around which the research report is organized"(Ezzy, 2002, p. 87). A sample of how I derived and refined themes related to religious identity construction and negotiation, moving from List A where the themes were listed in a random order to List B where they were organized in sub-categories, to List C where the major categories were rearranged in a logical order that matched the theoretical background of the study is attached in Appendix E.

Once the themes were organized in a logical way, it became possible to move to a more abstract theoretical level that appeared to hold true not only to religious identity but to the other two identities under investigation:

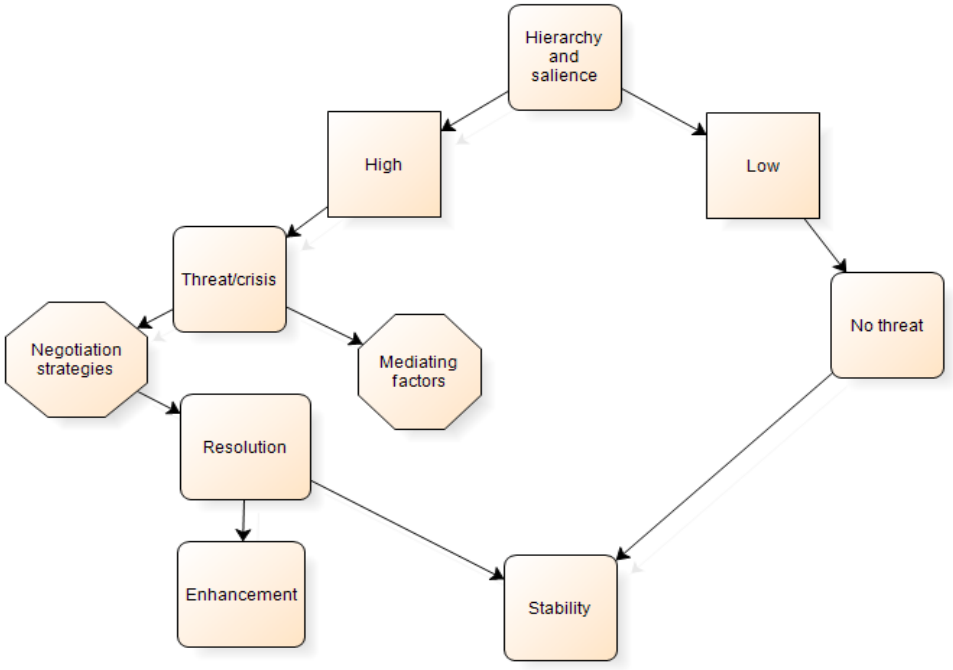


*Figure 5: Theoretical concepts model*

**4.7.4 Trustworthiness and rigour.** Lincoln and Guba (1985) succinctly summarized the core of qualitative research rigour in this question: "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?" (as cited in Thomas & Magilvy, 2011, p. 152)

Quantitative research uses the terms reliability and validity to demonstrate that research results are worthy of consideration. However, "these terms as defined in quantitative terms may not apply to the qualitative research paradigm" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 600). For example, "[w]hen quantitative researchers speak of research validity and reliability, they are usually referring to a research that is credible while the credibility of a qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 600).

Thus, several qualitative researchers have developed concepts that are more compatible with the qualitative research paradigm such as dependability, consistency, credibility, rigour (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and trustworthiness (Eisner, 1991). Internal validity, reliability and external validity were substituted by credibility, consistency and transferability respectively.

***4.7.4.1 Credibility.*** Credibility (validity) in qualitative research is not about a single “objective truth”; rather it increases “the correspondence between research and the real world” (Wolcott, 2005, as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 215). Several strategies can be used to achieve credibility, the most important of which is triangulation. The notion of triangulation, however, is being questioned in post-modern research because it assumes “that there is a “fixed point” or “object” that can be triangulated. There are far more than “three sides” from which to approach the world” (Richardson, 1998, p. 358). Crystallization is thus preferred because it allows the researcher to capture different dimensions and get in-depth understanding of phenomena. I prefer to use the term "crystallization" rather than "triangulation" to describe the use of these different lenses because "[t]he crystal 'combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, and alter, but are not amorphous' (Chiradson, 1994, p. 522)"(Janesick, 2000, p. 392).

Merriam (2009) explained that “[t]riangulation using multiple sources of *data* means comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data collected from people with different perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people” (p. 215). The current study compared and cross-checked data collected 1)

through two different facets of the crystal: the interviews and the focus group and 2) interviewed the same students at three different times over their first year at the university; 3) students who have different perspectives on the topic under investigation.

A further strategy used to ensure credibility is member checks or respondent validation (Merriam, 2009, p. 217). I solicited participants' feedback throughout data collection; on the one hand, I continuously double-checked my understanding of the participants' responses during an interview with a given participant and subsequent interviews. I also presented each interviewee with an oral summary of how I viewed his/her overall national, religious, and linguistic identity construction and negotiation process. I did so in a purposefully unassertive manner and invited them to rectify my understanding: "The way I see your national identity construction is... but I am not sure about this." All participants who remained in this study till the third round of interviews where I used this checking practice confirmed my understanding of their identity construction and negotiation, but there were very few occasions when a participant would shed more light on some aspect they felt they had not clarified enough. On the other hand, I used the focus group as a further opportunity to deepen my understanding of their identity construction and to explore reasons behind any conflicting findings. Maxwell (2005) argued that "[t]his is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstanding of what you observed" (p. 111, as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 217)

On the other hand, by the third interview I had reached data saturation which usually indicates adequate engagement in data collection. Data saturation, is another strategy that boosts credibility because it allows the researcher “to get as close as possible to participants’ understanding of a phenomenon” (Merriam, 2009, p. 219). A fourth strategy is researchers’ reflexivity on their biases and assumptions about their research in order to allow the readers to understand how they “have arrived at the particular interpretation of the data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 219). Finally, using the words of participants in the final report helps reinforce the credibility of a study. Therefore, in my results chapter I deliberately used quite a large number of quotes from the interviews and focus group to make my participants’ voice heard and allow the readers to understand and follow my interpretation of the data.

One issue that arose in relation to participants’ voices is related to translation as “[t]here is no neutral position from which to translate” (Temple & young, 2004, p. 164). Thus, a researcher should explicitly acknowledge and reflect on their translation-related practices and decisions and explain the measures they have taken to enhance the trustworthiness of their data.

Participants were given the choice to use whichever of the two languages we both spoke, Arabic and English, they felt comfortable conversing in. They were also reminded that they could switch from one language to the other whenever they wished. Although most of them chose to be interviewed in English, they occasionally switched to ECA, while three of them (Aya, Mostafa, Nardine) preferred to speak in ECA; after the first interview, Nardine opted out of the study; Mostafa continued to speak mainly in ECA, while Aya started speaking in English. The result was a data set predominantly in English with

small parts in ECA that needed to be translated. This raised both practical, ontological and methodological concerns; the former have been discussed in chapter four of this thesis whereas the last two concerns will be discussed next.

In an attempt to minimise the errors in translation and increase the trustworthiness of the data and consequently the validity of the results, I have taken several measures. When in doubt about the accuracy of my translation, I discussed it with the concerned participant "to ensure that the translated quotes convey the same meaning that was meant in Arabic and participants approve the manner in which their own words have been conveyed" (Al-Amer et al., 2016, p.156). For instance, I emailed Mahmoud the following two excerpts from one of his interviews because I was not sure how to translate the idiomatic adjective *"gamed";* I knew very well the different possible meanings of that term in ECA, but I was not sure which one his tone and facial expressions indicated; a sarcastic meaning "cocky", or an excited tone indicating admiration "cool", or perhaps he just meant "proficient" or "fluent". Having Mahmoud translate his statement was the best solution; he used the adjective "cool":

- *"eeh dah da walad amriki dah byetkalem baa w-gamed geddan baa howa"* [Oh wow, look at this kid. He's all American and talks in English and he's too cool for us] [Mahmoud's translation].
- *da gamed geddan baa manetkalemsh ma'ah* and so on" [We're not going to talk to him because he's too cool for us] [Mahmoud's translation].

Another measure I relied on was getting a second, often more, opinion(s) about the accurate translation of terms and expressions that do not have an exact equivalent in English, such as the idiomatic expression "عيشوا عيشة أهاليكو

*'eshu 'eshet ahaliku*". I asked some of my Egyptian friends and AUC colleagues to translate it into English, and then used my own judgment based on my knowledge of the Egyptian culture and the context in which the interviewee used the term or expression to decide on the most accurate translation.

While the above measures do not eradicate bias, at least they minimise it and attempt to remain as faithful to the participants' voices as possible.

***4.7.4.2 Dependability/Consistency.*** "Dependability" or "consistency" were first used in lieu of reliability by Lincoln and Guba (1985) who argued that "rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, a researcher wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense-they are consistent and dependable" (Merriam, 2009, p. 221). Reliability in its traditional sense is problematic in social science research because "human behavior is never static, nor is what many experience necessarily more reliable than what one person experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 221). Hence even if replicating a qualitative study will not produce similar findings, this does not undermine any study because the same data can be interpreted in different ways. What is important "for qualitative research is *whether the results are consistent with the data collected"* (Merriam, 2009, p. 221).

Having said this, however, there are several strategies that can be used by qualitative researchers to ensure the consistency and dependability of their results, such as triangulation and reflexivity already discussed in relation to credibility, and the audit trail whereby "independent readers can authenticate the findings of a study by following the trail of the researcher. While 'we cannot expect others to replicate our account,'Dey (1993, p. 251) writes, 'the best we can do is explain how we arrived at our results'" (Merriam, 2009, pp. 222-223).

Another way of achieving dependability is “look[ing] for data that support alternative explanations” (Merriam, 2009, p. 219).

# Chapter V: Results

## 5.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents and discusses my findings about Egyptian AUC students' identity construction and negotiation. It answers the following research question:

- How do Egyptian freshman students construct and negotiate their religious, national, and linguistic identities at AUC?

Based on a range of data sets - 12 transcripts from the first round of interviews, 10 transcripts from the second round of interviews, 9 transcripts from the third round of interviews; 1 focus group transcript - I first introduce the participants in the study, and then I present the findings related to each of the three identity components under investigation in a separate section in the following order: religious identity, national identity, and language identity. These findings are based on my analysis of the individual interviews and the focus group.

Each section begins with a list of themes and sub-themes to help the reader navigate the results. The findings about each of the three identity components under study are presented, supported with quotes from the data, and discussed before presenting findings about the next identity component. I indicate the source of the data excerpts by signalling the pseudonym of the participant followed by the data type and round; for instance, (Mona/Interview 1) refers to an excerpt from Mona's interview from round one. However, I only indicate the interview round when it is necessary to understand the result or show change. It is necessary for instance to signal that a quote is taken from the first round of interviews to demonstrate a student's initial thoughts, feelings,

and attitudes, but not necessarily important to signal a quote from the second round if no noticeable change has happened, unless that stability is itself important to highlight. The quotes are the original transcribed voices of the participants except for a few interviews in which the students preferred to use ECA; these are signalled by the phrase [translation mine] following the quote. In instances where the participants switched from English to ECA, all ECA utterances were first transliterated and italicized to make it easier for the readers to recognize them, and then translated into English. At the end of each of the three main sections, a summary of results is presented.

The interviews and the focus group were coded inductively; however, the coding was not done in a vacuum since I, as a researcher, have been influenced by the literature on identity development (See chapter 4 for more details on data analysis). For some themes, I was already familiar with the literature concepts, such as “hierarchy of identities” and “agency”, but for other themes, I used my own terminology only to realize later that the literature already had a term for that exact concept I was trying to capture; for instance, while I was coding religious identity data, I created three nodes that I called “family support”, “peer support”, and “institutional support.” I then grouped them under a mother node that I labelled as “Sources of identity support.” However, as I continued to read the literature on religious identity construction, I came across the more accurate term of “safe havens” (Chaudhury & Miller, 2008) which captures the exact role those sources of support represented for the students, so I used it instead.

Similarly, I analysed the interviews and focus group data in an inductive way, reading and rereading data, looking for patterns within and across data sets, making conclusions, only to find that identity literature does provide an

explanation for my findings. For example, I noticed that some students went through a distinct process of identity construction “crisis-resolution-enhancement” before I read Burke & Stets (2009) cybernetic model, described in the literature review chapter, which succinctly describes and explains the processes that the students went through. Thus, although I did not start from Burke & Stets (2009) cybernetic model while analysing my data, my findings did parallel and are validated by that model.

## 5.2 Description of Participants

This section briefly introduces the 12 students’ social and educational backgrounds based on the interviews and focus group. It also presents their linguistic proficiency in SA, ECA, and English. Their proficiency evaluation was based on their self-evaluation, double-checked by my evaluation of their spoken ECA and English during the interviews and other formal and informal interactions I had with them on campus, and on their reading practices reports, particularly for SA that I could not evaluate first-hand since it is mainly a written language not used in everyday interactions. For those who were my students for one semester (Alia, Heba, Elham, Mostafa, Marina, Nardine, Hala), the evaluation of their spoken, read and written English was also based on my evaluation of their course work). Their gender (f=female/m=male), age, religion (M=Muslim/C=Christian), and nationality (EG=Egyptian/ CA=Canadian/ US=American) are indicated between parentheses following their pseudonyms. More relevant individual details are provided while presenting and discussing the results.

- Alia (f/19/M/EG) is the eldest among three siblings. She got the Abitur (German high school diploma) from the German School in Cairo and was studying Engineering at AUC. She spoke Egyptian Colloquial

Arabic (ECA), German and English fluently, and had a good level of Standard Arabic (SA). Alia lived with her mother because her parents were divorced; her mother is a university professor and her father is a self-employed engineer. She had travelled to Germany and the UK before joining AUC.

- Aya (f/20/M/EG) is the eldest among three siblings. She got the *Thanaweyya Amma* (Egyptian high school diploma) from a public experimental school in Cairo and was studying political science at AUC. She was one of the top ten students with the highest *Thanaweyya Amma* scores across Egypt, which qualified her for AUC's LEAD Scholarship. Aya lived with her mother, a public school teacher, because her parents were divorced but she stayed in the university dorms as part of her scholarship. Aya spoke ECA fluently. Her SA level was very good. Her English writing and reading were quite good but her listening and speaking were limited. She was born in KSA and lived there until she was six; she never travelled abroad since then, before joining AUC.
- Elham (f/18/M/EG) is the middle child among three siblings. She got the *Thanaweyya Amma* (Egyptian high school diploma) from a public school. She was one of the top ten students with the highest *Thanaweyya Amma* scores across Egypt, which qualified her for the LEAD Scholarship. Elham lived in Alexandria but she stayed in the university dorms during the semester as part of her scholarship. Her mother is a housewife and her father is a clerk. She never travelled abroad before joining AUC but she was exposed to the English language and Western liberal concepts through watching TED Talks

and through an educational programme she participated in outside her governmental school. Elham wanted to major in Psychology. She spoke ECA fluently. Her SA level was very good. Her English writing and reading were quite good but her listening and speaking skills were average.

- Hala (f/17/M/EG) is the eldest child and has one brother. She obtained IGCSE/A-levels from the British School. She wanted to study either Economics or Political Science. Her mother is a housewife and her father is an engineer. She withdrew from this study after the first interview.
- Heba (f/18/M/EG) is the eldest among three siblings. She got the American Diploma from Narmer American College in Cairo and is studying Business Administration at AUC. Her parents are both Egyptian but they have Turkish and Syrian origins. Her extended family is a "global family" as she called it, with several mixed marriages and relatives living in different parts of the world and speaking different Arabic accents and languages. Heba spoke English fluently. Her ECA was intermixed with Syrian-Lebanese words. She had travelled to the US to visit her relatives before joining AUC.
- Khaled (m/18/M/EG) is an only child. He was born and had lived in Egypt until he was 15; then he moved with his parents to KSA and was studying Engineering at AUC. Both of his parents are engineers. He obtained IGCSEs/A-levels from KSA. Khaled withdrew from this study after the second interview. Khaled spoke ECA and English fluently but used a lot of American slang and occasionally made grammatical mistakes.

- Marina (f/18/C/EG) is the middle child of three. She was born in Egypt then her parents moved to Kuwait when she was two. Her parents are civil engineers. She obtained IGCSEs/A-levels from Kuwait. She lived in the AUC dorms. She spoke fluent ECA and impeccable English. She wanted to major in architecture.
- Mahmoud (m/17/M/US-EG) is the youngest of two siblings. He was born and raised in the US till age 11. Then he moved to Egypt where he lived with his divorced mother. His father is a businessman and his mother is a housewife. He got the American Diploma from Cairo American College and studied biotechnology at AUC. He was a fluent speaker of ECA and a native speaker of English.
- Mona (f/18/M/EG) was born and raised in KSA until the age of 15 when she moved with her family to Egypt. She got the American Diploma from Cairo American College. She spoke fluent ECA with a Syrian accent and very good English. She is the middle child in a family of six. Her father is an engineer and her mother is a housewife. She was studying Engineering at AUC.
- Mostafa (m/18/M/EG) is the eldest of two siblings. He was born and raised in Cairo, Egypt. He obtained IGCSEs/A-levels from Dar El-Tarbiyah language school. He spoke fluent ECA and average English. He was studying Business Administration at the AUC.
- Nardine (f/19/C/EG-US) was born and raised in Cairo, Egypt. She is the youngest of three siblings. She got the American Diploma from Al-Alsun school. She spoke fluent ECA and good English. She withdrew from this study after the first interview.

- Yassin (m/18/M/CA-EG) KSA was born and lived in Canada until he was10 when his family moved back to Egypt before they moved once more to KSA. Yassin obtained IGCSEs/A-levels from an international school in KSA. He studied engineering at the AUC. He spoke fluent ECA with a negligible accent and is a native speaker of English. He lived in their Cairo apartment with a relative of his.

## 5.3 Religious Identity

This sub-section reports my findings about the participants' religious identity construction and negotiation. It specifically answers this research question "How do AUC freshman students construct and negotiate their religious identity at the AUC?" Before I present the study's findings about the freshman students' religious identity construction and negotiation, I present, in table 6, the list of the themes and sub-themes that would be discussed in order to make it easier for the reader to understand the structure of this section. This is based on a thematic analysis, as described in the methodology chapter. Data coding examples are attached in Appendix F.

*Table 6*

*List of Themes and Sub-themes Related to Religious Identity*

| **Themes** | **Sub-themes** |
|---|---|
| Hierarchy of religious identity | • Prominence of religious identity<br>• Salience of religious identity |
| Perceived challenges to religious identity at AUC | • No challenge<br>• Challenging social environment<br>  ○ Unsolicited interaction with opposite sex<br>  ○ Unwanted touch behaviour<br>  ○ Inappropriate language and cursing<br>• Liberal education and alternative worldviews |
| Identity crisis | • No crisis<br>• Religious identity disruption/helplessness and frustration<br>  ○ Feeling different<br>  ○ Inability to counter-argue challenging worldviews<br>  ○ Inability to reconcile religious belief with scientific knowledge |
| Mediating factors | • Prior exposure<br>• Family/parents |
| Agency/ Negotiation strategies | • Avoidance of challenging social situations and of class discussion of alternative worldviews<br>• Changing challenging social situations<br>• Safe havens<br>  ○ Students' clubs<br>  ○ Religious institutions: Church/Mosque<br>• Increasing religious rituals<br>• Re-exploration of religious identity |
| Identity resolution | • Compromise<br>• Tolerance |
| Identity enhancement | • Reinforced religious knowledge and beliefs<br>• More prominent religious identity |

**5.3.1 Religious identity hierarchy**. When asked during the first round of interviews to arrange their national, religious and linguistic identity components in order of importance, none of the interviewed students ranked their religious identity last except for Hala who withdrew from the study after the first interview. They all ranked it either first (n=10) or second (n=1). Of the ten students who ranked it first, four students (Aya; Mona; Mostafa; Khaled) reported that religious and national identities were equally placed at the top of their hierarchy, as illustrated in table 7.

Hala did not give a clear ranking; she said that religion is important in her life but still ranked her religious identity last. Perhaps Hala's inconsistent answer reflected her own confusion about her religious identity as she reported that she was sometimes annoyed by her mother "always talking about religion" (Hala/interview1), or perhaps she said that religion is important in her life out of social tact and politeness toward her teacher and researcher since my dress code, wearing a head scarf, could have implied religiousness.

The finding that most students ranked their religious identity first is not surprising if one considers the role religion plays in the Egyptian society and its heavy presence in the Egyptian public discourse. In fact, "for a variety of reasons, for many individuals religion remains an important organizing factor in the hierarchy of identities that compose the self" (Peek, 2005, p. 219).

The fact that the interviewed students ranked their religious identity on or close to the top of the hierarchy of their identities in the interviews indicates the prominence of that identity but not necessarily its salience. While the prominence hierarchy reflects the ideal self, "how individuals like to see themselves given their ideals, desires, or what is central or important to them", the salience hierarchy reflects the situational self, "the self that responds to the

*Table 7*

*Religious Identity Rank (Compared to National and Linguistic Identities) on Prominence Hierarchy*

| | **Prominence** | | | **Salience** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **First Rank** | **Second Rank** | **Third Rank** | |
| **Round 1** Oct-Nov 2011 | • Mahmoud<br>• Marina<br>• Elham<br>• Yassin<br>• Nardine<br>• Aya (=national)<br>• Mostafa (=national)<br>• Mona (=national)<br>• Khaled (=national) | • Alia<br>• Heba | • Hala | • Mahmoud<br>• Marina<br>• Yassin<br>• Aya |
| **Round 2** Feb-March 2012 | • Mahmoud<br>• Yassin<br>• Aya<br>• Khaled<br>• Mona (≤national)<br>• Mostafa | • Alia<br>• Heba<br>• Marina<br>• Elham | | • Mahmoud<br>• Marina<br>• Yassin<br>• Aya |
| **Round 3** May-June 2012 | • Mahmoud<br>• Yassin<br>• Aya<br>• Mostafa | • Alia<br>• Heba<br>• Marina<br>• Mona | • Elham | • Mahmoud<br>• Marina<br>• Yassin<br>• Aya |

expectations of the situation rather than the desires of the self" (Burke & Stets 2009, pp. 40-41). Although Elham and Nardine ranked their religious identity higher than their national and linguistic identities (prominence hierarchy/ideal self), it was not the driving force behind their actions as it was for Mahmoud, Marina, Yassin, and Aya who displayed an unmistakably salient religious identity throughout the study. In other words, Mahmoud, Marina, Yassin, and Aya's situational selves enacted a high degree of religiousness; all of them were highly committed to religious teachings and affiliated to groups that

revolve around religion on and/or outside campus. Marina was doing voluntary service as a Sunday-class teacher for a group of very young children in a nearby Church and was a member of AUC's Bible study group; Mahmoud and Yassin were active members of SuperMuslims as well as AUC's Resala and Help Club; Mahmoud was involved in regular Quran study classes in a mosque and fasted two days a week, almost every week; Aya was a member of Sabeel Club and regularly read and listened to Quran. A description of these students' clubs is provided in Appendix G. Moreover, their response to the expectations of a given situation (situational self) was almost always checked against their ideal selves as individuals with a prominent religious identity. When I asked Mahmoud for instance what role religion played in his life, he responded as follows:

> It plays a huge role. It plays a huge role. It determines who I am, not who I am in the sense of… It determines who I am in the sense of what I do and how I do things, what's right and what's wrong, I'll stay away from this, I'll do this, I'll do that, the right way to do things. So, it plays a huge role. (Mahmoud/Interview1)

Mahmoud's religious identity is clearly both prominent and salient; religion was not only important for his ideal self but also for his situational self since he behaved in light of what he judged to be religiously right or wrong.

The prominence and salience of their religious identity played an important role in their religious identity construction as will be discussed later in this section.

**5.3.2 Religious identity crisis**. The degree of prominence and salience of their religious identity on the hierarchy of identities at the time of joining AUC seems to have played an important role in whether the participants had worries about their religiousness at AUC or not, i.e. whether they underwent a religious

identity crisis or not, and consequently how they constructed and negotiated that identity. Holcomb and Nonneman (2004) defined crisis as "a prolonged period of active engagement with, and exploration of, competing roles and ideologies . . . [including] anything that challenges people to examine what they believe and why" (as cited in Bryant & Astin, 2008, p. 5). These “[m]oments of shipwreck, Parks suggested, come to bear on the young adult life in varied ways: relational trauma; realization of social injustice, suffering, and death; intellectual challenges to earlier faith; and disruptions in one's understanding of the nature of life and the world” (as cited in Bryant & Astin, 2008, p. 6).

***5.3.2.1 Perception of AUC***. Students who had a prominent religious identity and primarily identified themselves in relation to their religious identity (Yassin, Aya, Mahmoud, Marina, Elham) reported feeling worried about their religiousness before and/or immediately upon joining AUC (Aya ranked both her religious and national identities equally; however, her three interviews indicate a very prominent and salient religious identity). Yassin, who had a very prominent religious identity as demonstrated by the following excerpt from his first interview was very much worried about his religiousness:

> I love my religion and uh I read Quran and I read *ahadith* [sayings of prophet Mohamed] and I know *ahadith* and I can defend myself. I know how to support myself in particular issues in Islam. I know the prophet peace be upon him. I know his, most, I mean a very large proportion of his history. So uh religion is very important. I mean it kind of defines your soul; I mean soul and mind. It just defines you; it just defines who you are, how you act (Yassin/Interview 1)

His main worry was related to:

> illegal stuff, you know, like drugs, alcohol, uh PDA [Public display of affection], lots and lots of PDA. I gotta stress that and put it bold and sixty underlines; um so I was afraid of all that stuff. (Yassin/Interview 1)

The only one who did not report such worries among students with a religious identity on the top of their identity prominence hierarchy was Nardine who, despite ranking her religious identity above the other two identities under study, told me during the only interview that I conducted with her that she did not consider herself religious because she did not follow Christian teachings as closely as "religious Christians" do:

> NARDINE: I use religion sometimes, yet I'm not religious.
>
> SANAA: Meaning?
>
> NARDINE: One should pray and follow the religious teachings and stuff.
>
> SANAA: But you go to the church and read the Bible?
>
> NARDINE: Yes.
>
> SANAA: Still you don't see yourself as religious?
>
> NARDINE: No. Some people are more religious than me; they do things for religion. [translation mine] (Nardine/Interview1)

Nardine apparently held religion high in relation to her ideal self, what she thinks a good Christian should be like; thus, she ranked her religious identity first followed by her national and language identities respectively. However, she did not rank it high on the salience hierarchy; her situational self did not follow the ideals held in her religious identity standard. She did not "pray and follow the religious teachings and stuff," nor did she "do things for religion." Religion was not her driving force.

In contrast to students with a prominent religious identity, students for whom religious identity either did not rank high on their hierarchy of identities (Alia, Heba) or was equally ranked with their national identity (Khaled, Mostafa) or alternated the first position with national identity across interview rounds (Mona) did not perceive any threats to their religious identity at the AUC, and

constructed their religious identity in a subtle manner. They were more relaxed about exposure to concepts and practices that were incompatible with or questioned their religious beliefs. Alia, for example, who ranked her religious identity second after linguistic identity, did not consider being around friends who drank alcohol a threat to her religious identity. Although she herself did not drink alcohol, she explained that her abstinence was not driven by religious devotion:

> [Religion] is also something that uni [university] doesn't really change. I'm really convinced *ya'any* [Arabic word for "I mean"], here for example my friends they drink, so, but my friends at school they drank as well. But now *ya'any* I can't, I don't have, I feel like I don't have the right to judge them; they're my friends; they have good qualities; this is something that I don't like them doing but they do it, I have to accept it, and um, but I don't have to do it. But I'm not doing it because I'm not supposed to do it; no, I'm not doing it because I'm convinced that I shouldn't do it. […] Because I know, well you're going to a party, you're supposed to have fun. How can you have fun? And having fun means that you'll have something nice to remember, but *ya'any* have fun while being sober not while you let your mind go. (Alia/Interview 1)

Alia's previous exposure to the hybrid lifestyle of some of her friends back at the German school clearly played a role in the way she perceived practices incompatible with Islamic religion, such as drinking alcohol. Unlike Yassin, Marina, and Aya who have not been directly exposed to a similar lifestyle; Aya went to an experimental public Egyptian school where most female students would typically be wearing an "Islamic" attire (usually an ankle-long skirt, long-sleeved shirt, and a head scarf) and where practices like drinking alcohol are considered taboo; Yassin had just arrived from Saudi Arabia where according to him a strict and "extreme" Islamic lifestyle is enforced in the public sphere;

Marina had lived all her life in Kuwait. As such, they had never been part of a community that is as closely similar to the AUC community as Alia had.

Widely-held stereotypes about the AUC -explained in chapter three- might have been yet another reason that caused these three participants and/or their parents to have worries that their religiousness could be compromised when they join AUC's "open and liberal" community, especially because they did not have any friends who had already joined the AUC and who could have refuted those stereotypes. In one of my RHET classes (Rhetoric and Composition) in 2012, students administered a survey to Egyptians outside the AUC community to explore the most common stereotypes about AUC students. The survey results indicated that AUC students were generally viewed as "rich spoiled kids" who lived in a bubble and as such were not in touch with Egyptian reality, that they lived "à l'américaine" in the sense of leading an Americanized lifestyle where Egyptian values and religious teachings are generally not observed. All participants reported hearing similar stereotypes from relatives, friends, or complete strangers. In the following excerpt, for example, Alia explained the stereotypical image of AUC students that she herself held before studying at AUC:

> Non-AUCians have the image that I had before I became an AUCian, which is they are shallow; we only care about clothes and stuff and it's an easy uni and everything, all the stuff that we're in America or we're like Americans. (Alia/Interview2)

A probable reason behind stereotyping AUC students is the high tuition fees that make AUC unaffordable and inaccessible to most Egyptians. AUC is perceived as an elitist university attended only by the extremely wealthy who are usually stereotyped in Egypt as nonreligious or at best a lot less religious than regular Egyptians.

As stated above, three of the nine students whose religious identity ranked towards the top of the prominence hierarchy (Nardine, Khaled, Mona) did not display any such worries because their religious identity, although high on the prominence hierarchy, was not high on the salience hierarchy. On the other hand, the only three students among those with a high religious identity on both the prominence and salience hierarchies who manifested greater worry were Yassin, Marina and Aya. Close analysis of the data indicates that the presence, intensity, and absence of initial worry among students with both a prominent and salient religious identity is strongly related to family support, mainly parental support. Yassin, Marina, and Aya were different from other students with both a prominent and salient religious identity in that they were living away from home after joining AUC, and consequently experienced a decrease in family support with regard to religious identity. They all came from reportedly closely-knit families where one or both parents is religiously committed and acted as the main agent of religious socialization and source of support for the student. In contrast, other students with a prominent and salient religious identity who also came from well-knit families were still living with one or both of their parents after joining AUC (Mahmoud for example).

Although Aya's family lived in Cairo, she met them on the weekends only, because she lived in the university dorms. Yassin and Marina, had just arrived from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait respectively, where their families were still living. When asked whether she thought her religious identity would be enhanced at the AUC, Marina doubted that it would:

> I don't think it would be enhanced that much because I'm also losing a big part which is my family encouraging me to do what's right and to go to church and stuff, so I'm losing that. (Marina/Interview1)

Yassin explained the role his father had played in building his religious identity:

> but my dad isn't the really strict type of religion, I mean I laugh and I joke and I have fun and I often, you know, do something out of the ordinary, but the concept is that you just have to have a value in your life. You're gonna die at the end of the day; don't have too much fun and don't kill yourself. You know, just be moderate. And my dad has been teaching me that from day one. He's taught me how to pray; he's constantly tell me how to be in contact with religion and stuff, so I think I take it, I take it from him, I think I do. (Yassin/Interview 1)

***5.3.2.2 Perceived threats to religious identity***. The main perceived challenges to the students' religious identities could be classified into two major categories: 1) Challenges that had to do with AUC's social environment and 2) challenges related to the type of education offered at the AUC. In the next sub-section I discuss these perceived challenges and threats to religious identity as reported by some students and the negotiation strategies they have utilized to deal with them.

***Social Environment***. The four students with a very prominent religious identity (Yassin, Mahmoud, Aya, Marina) reported that the social environment was sometimes challenging to their religious identity and made them feel different compared to the majority. The social environment included daily interactions with the opposite sex, namely unwanted touch behaviour, and perceiving AUC environment as non-religion-friendly.

The first challenge, reported only by Muslim students (Yassin, Mahmoud, and Aya), was related to unsolicited interactions with the opposite sex and inappropriate language and touch behaviour. Sometimes those interactions were unavoidable as they took part in the classroom, so the students could not do anything about them. Mahmoud reported feeling helpless when he was paired in a class activity with a girl who kept tapping him on the shoulder: "I

have to, there's nothing I could do. I mean it was an activity, so there's nothing I could do, um that's about it" (Mahmoud/ Interview). Similarly, Yassin recounted an incident when a female classmate sat so close to him that her legs were repeatedly touching his, but he felt it would be awkward to change his seat, so he resorted to the following strategy:

> I just go to the bathroom, stay there for five minutes, and then hopefully she'd sit at a different position, and then I just go and sit, and then sometimes it just keeps on repeating herself; it's just like this incessant chain of touching. Awkwardness has reached its limits at AUC. (Yassin/Interview 3)

When the interactions with the opposite sex took place outside class, the students came up with several strategies that varied from Aya's direct objection when a male student called her *habibty* [babe] to Mahmoud's limiting of time spent around girls, to being creative in avoiding unnecessary touch behaviour with females, to compromising to an occasional handshake. Mahmoud described some of his strategies in the following excerpt:

> Strategy number one, uh I try to limit my time with uh, I mean a lot of my female friends, my female classmates, they tend to uh hang out with me after class and I've got stuff to do, I just try to, you know, cut it short. If you need something, *ahlan wa sahlan* [you're welcome], but just you wanna chat, you wanna get a bagel, you wanna eat, fine I don't mind doing it, but not like every single time, so I try to limit that.[…] uh, the handshake thing, uh that I avoid by a technique I do. […] When I, like I'd see someone, I'd see someone, you know, coming towards me and I know they're gonna say hi to me, I just do like hey! (waved) (laughter). It's just as simple as that.[…]But sometimes they, they'd come up to you and they'd like hey and I'm like Ok I'm fine, I don't mind doing it.[…] I mean I'm not gonna tell them, I'm sorry I don't shake hands with a woman, but if it's someone I see every single class and every time she does that, I would tell her. (Mahmoud/Interview 2)

Yassin even went to the extreme of keeping his hand in a plaster cast long after it had healed, since it stopped girls from shaking hands with him.

Only Muslim students reported the challenge of setting limits while dealing with the opposite sex. This is due to the emphasis in the Islamic religious discourse on gender segregation and avoidance of physical contact with the opposite sex, including shaking hands with non-*mahrams*; *mahrams* are people of kinship whom one cannot marry such as one's parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, nephews, parents in-law, and children.

The second challenge related to AUC's social environment reported by the participants highly committed to religion is the students' use of profane language. Mahmoud explained that he repeatedly found himself in situations where AUC students used the "F word". At first, he simply avoided them by removing himself from the situation when possible:

> Well, eventually I do leave (laughter) because I mean it's not fun; it's not a funny environment to be in. But sometimes when I'm with friends and, you know, there's nothing else I can do, I mean I try to change the subject, but it's embedded in every single sentence. It's embedded. (Mahmoud/Interview 2)

However, by the end of the academic year, he had obviously developed negotiation strategies to act upon the situation in accordance with his religious principles instead of simply walking away or remaining silent:

> I, I, yes, I find more ways to deal with them. I try to, this is what I've learned because you know the Prophet PBUH [Peace be upon him] he wasn't just ignoring; if someone did something bad, he would try to change that or try to teach him in an indirect way, like I won't come to a person who starts cursing "Oh, no it's wrong to curse", he knows that already, but I would try to do something different, so if he starts cursing about something, I'd be like okay and I talk really really politely or I talk

about something that doesn't have to do with cursing, and then he gets to the certain atmosphere that no I'm not supposed to curse in here or I'm not supposed to curse right now. It's just a certain atmosphere, so I create an environment where he's not supposed to curse or it's, he feels humiliated or wrong his cursing. (Mahmoud/Interview 3)

These perceived challenges caused these students to feel different from mainstream AUCians in terms of religious identity, precisely in their degree of abidance by religious teachings. Yassin talked about peer pressure and the difficulty of feeling different:

> People push you towards, they make you feel usually quite different and.., something very difficult for many people. When people feel that they're standing out, they usually like to blend in with people. And in the club [one of the students' clubs he is a member of], it's everyone is like me, so that's fine, we're all cool. And, but outside when you start interacting with people and you start showing them your ideology they start repelling from you, and you suddenly, being in the middle of the spotlight right there, you have either one of two options, either you stay there and you be proud of what you did or be confident of what you're doing and say it's right at the end of the day, or be you. (Yassin/Interview)

Aya who comes from a middle-class family and who attended a public Egyptian school explained that before joining AUC she had never interacted with the higher class, but when she dealt with them at AUC she found that "they didn't even know anything about the religions, and it's not their fault, so it's their parents' fault" (Aya/Interview). For example, she was very much shocked when a Muslim Yemeni classmate did not know who Prophet *Yusuf* [Joseph] was. Mahmoud, on the other hand, complained about classmates not responding to the Islamic greeting *assalamu-alaikum* [peace be upon you] that is used not

only by religious people but also by typical Egyptians regardless of their degree of abidance by religious teachings:

> I would walk in the class, I say *salamu alaikum* [Peace be upon you], like two or few guys in the back say *alaikum salam* [Peace be upon you too] and the girls are like, only two girls would say *alaikum salam wa rahmatuallah wa barakatuh* [Peace and God's blessings upon you] and they're smiling, and the others are like ok. I mean the Muslim girls who are veiled and wear *abayas* [full-length coats], they smile, I mean that's what Islam is, I mean others are like...(Mahmoud/Interview)

Yassin as well reported feeling different as he eloquently recounted his journey of negotiating his religious identity at AUC:

> uh at the beginning when I first entered the university, that was the most difficult part of the whole AUC idea because then it's the interaction and getting-to-know-people stage and that's usually the very difficult stage when you introduce religion as a part of your character people start picking whether to befriend you or not, and that is the very difficult stage. As long as you pass that stage and you're still fine, you're gonna be, you're gonna be sailing smoothly. I passed that stage, thank God, quite well, and people now know uh that I don't shake girls' hands and I'm quite not too bad on my religious manners; I know my religion quite well. Once you've done that and people have known you to be that way and have befriended you with that ideology, you can keep on moving on very, quite easily, uh it's much less difficult now. (Yassin/Interview 3)

Both Mahmoud and Mona were shocked that religion was almost a taboo topic at AUC. Mahmoud was surprised that AUCians avoid talking about religion and start *"fidgeting in their chairs"* when religion is mentioned in classes. Mona also noted that:

> religion doesn't play a big part here, like.. everyone, everyone tries to, not act open-minded, but everyone's acting accepting and that the, that religion doesn't matter and stuff, so like even in class, we don't, we don't discuss religion much, as much as culture in general. But, you know

> that's not really a bad thing since there's like so many different people around here religion-wise. (Mona/Interview)

Their impressions that religion-related topics were avoided at AUC were confirmed by other students who were not as highly committed to religion, such as Alia, Heba, and Mostafa. Alia viewed religion as a very delicate topic, a "red line" not to be crossed except with very close friends:

> ALIA: Yeah, but it's just about, about how comfortable you are with the person, cause it's, religion is a really controversial topic here, so we don't *yaany*
>
> SANAA: You avoid it?
>
> ALIA: Not avoid it, but I respect people's boundaries. I think that this is a red line that, *yaany* I have to respect until I'm really close to that person. (Alia/Interview)

*At the time of conducting* this study, religious identity was at the heart of the political scene in Egypt. The election of President Mohamed Morsi who is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, that had until then been illegal for several decades and demonized by Egyptian media, triggered a wave of anti-religion feelings that manifested itself in the rise of the number of atheists and female Muslims taking off their *hijab*. This general atmosphere could be the cause behind avoiding such a controversial topic as religion.

***Liberal Education and Alternative Worldviews*.** Another factor perceived by some students as a challenge to their religious identity is related to the liberal education offered at the AUC, an education that exposes them to alternative worldviews such as evolution theory and scepticism that go against their religious beliefs. These Western concepts are studied mainly in two of the common core courses: Scientific Thinking and Philosophical Thinking. The unease caused by those alternative worldviews was reported by Christian and

Muslim students alike. Marina, a devout Christian, postponed taking the Philosophical Thinking course after being warned by one of her friends:

> They told me, this is exactly what they, like I'm literally quoting one of my Christian friends, she told me "don't concentrate in class", like "you need to" (laughter). “I'm not kidding”, she told me, "don't concentrate on anything in class; if you start like thinking about the ideas, they'll start getting into your head, you'll start believing them and then like your whole foundation is just gonna fall apart. (Marina/Interview)

The students’ reactions to these courses varied along a continuum between total indifference and total anger. Students whose religious identity did not rank high did not consider the alternative worldviews present in their curricula as a challenge to their religious identity construction. They were either indifferent like Heba and Mostafa who were not interested in the Scientific Thinking course to start with, or else they dealt with these concepts in a detached manner whereby they treated them as just another class material to be covered in order to pass the course:

> The human, the human part [of evolution] I'm completely against, completely disapprove it, when I listen to it, I just you know listen to it and I really don't mind it. I study it, yes; I get tested on it, yes but I just disregard it completely. [Translation mine] (Mostafa/Interview)

Heba and Mostafa reported completely tuning out the professor. Heba contended that the course was a waste of time:

> HEBA: Waste of my life; it's so bad like I go there, I don't learn anything; if anything, I feel like my IQ is decreasing by staying long boring lectures and they're so traditional. Like if you are going to make us wake up at, early on a Tuesday when all our friends are sleeping at home or if we could be doing anything to make us at ease, make it interesting. Every time I go and you just talk, I don't even know what you're talking about. I don't even care and I don't wanna care *ya’any* because I can't; it's that bad; it's so

SANAA: Do you tune the lecturer out?

HEBA: Yes, everything, it goes in from one ear and comes up from the other, like oooh flying out, so it's so boring. (Heba/Interview)

In contrast to Heba and Mostafa, students whose religious identity ranked high felt various degrees of resentment towards those concepts, indicating an obvious state of identity confusion that was then followed by identity resolution and even identity enhancement.

***5.3.2.3 Previous exposure as a mediating factor.*** I will show in this section how previous exposure, among students with a prominent religious identity, to concepts such as scepticism about the existence of God and evolution or lack thereof seems to have determined whether they perceived those concepts as a threat to their religious identity or just as alternative worldviews they had to be exposed to. Elham, for example, who was educated in the Egyptian national system where similar subjects are taboo, did not perceive the Scientific Thinking course as a threat. Instead, she believed that the teacher neither had the intention to offend them nor wanted them to take it personally; she just wanted them to know about alternative worldviews "something that people study out there and [they had] to know about it." (Elham)

Elham explained that her attitude stemmed from her prior exposure to similar beliefs in a much stronger and direct form:

> I've already read about these things, and actually they are like being cautious speaking about it at my classroom, like in the, in the lectures I watched they were more open about it like they were like "what nonsense? Those religious people they say nonsense" [imitating them and laughing]. They always speak this way, but at my scientific thinking class I think they're more, like she says "I'm not trying to make you change your beliefs." (Elham/Interview)

This quote illustrates the argument that previous exposure to alternative worldviews mediates how the students with a prominent religious identity respond to those concepts. Elham argued that prior exposure through extra-curricular readings and TED talks was the reason behind her actual reaction towards these concepts; she explained that she had a different reaction when she first encountered those same concepts:

> I was bothered. I felt like how could anyone come and say that God doesn't exist? How could you tackle such a thing? Look around you and you'll see that God exists. I don't know, we are a sign of, like we're a sign that God exists, but when like they talk about it in like those, when like sceptics and atheists and like agnostics talk about it, I feel like it's like, I don't know I feel it's an essential thing and it's like a personal thing more but they are taking it towards like science, but science can't always be right because at the scientific thinking class actually we study something called paradigm shift. So, who knows? Maybe like we will face a paradigm that shifts all the sceptical ideas that you're having now. I feel like it's almost like more spiritual than like individual. It's not like something that can study. (Elham/Interview*)*

Elham is not the only participant whose previous exposure to similar concepts, whether directly or indirectly, prepared her to deal with them in a calm manner. Elham had already gone through a religious identity crisis before she joined AUC and had become more resilient to identity crises. When asked why these ideas did not put his religious creed in doubt, Yassin stated two reasons; first, that he had heard these ideas before, and second, he was wary because he had been warned that learning "about philosophy and ideas about different philosophers over time […] might affect [his] religion". (Yassin)

**5.3.3 Religious identity negotiation**. This section explains how students with a prominent religious identity negotiated their religious identities; in other words, what strategies they used to deal with perceived challenges and

resolve their identity crises. These strategies ranged from total avoidance, at first, for some participants to questioning one's beliefs before reaching a compromise between those beliefs and other worldviews, and finally an increase in acceptance of difference.

***5.3.3.1 Avoidance***. Encountering alternative worldviews caused fear among some participants with a prominent religious identity, which pushed them to resort to avoidance strategies. Marina chose to postpone taking the Philosophical Thinking course till the following year based on her friend's warning:

> I think I am gonna take a little bit of advice and that I'm not gonna take it, take the issues at heart but I don't know how I can avoid that; like, I don't know, she's telling me like do the course, write the essays and that kind of thing but be detached from all of it. (Marina/Interview 1)

Other students who took the Scientific and Philosophical Thinking courses used another form of avoidance, avoiding taking part in class arguments about these "threatening" concepts. These students took offense in studying concepts that they saw as incompatible with their religious creed, such as Socrates' dialogues and Greek mythology. Mona, for instance, expressed her unhappiness with some class discussions and with her inability to counter-argue:

> MONA: He's [Socrates] always, he's always trying to argue against like everything, and I don't, I don't like that (laughter), like he's against everything. But um when we are talking about the, I think it was the existence of God and stuff, I didn't like that cause there's part of Islam where you have to believe um without even like
>
> SANAA: *bilghayb* [without seeing].
>
> MONA: Yeah, *bilghayb*
>
> SANAA: Without seeing.

MONA: Yeah and she, the professor was always like so you guys just follow someone without [unintelligible], and I didn't like that, like kind of offended me and I couldn't explain it to her like we, all class we're Muslims so we tried to argue back with her, we couldn't explain it cause as you said *bilghayb* and it was annoying. (Mona/Interview)

Mona also felt offended when they questioned God's existence in class discussions:

MONA: It's wrong and against God, like "there's, there's all the stuff like there're bad people in the world and if God were perfect and why would he create bad people?"

SANAA: You discuss things like that?

MONA: Yeah that means God is not perfect. It's like, I got really offended. A lot of people in class were very annoyed that day, not just me. (Mona/Interview)

Yassin, as well felt, disturbed by discussing Greek mythology that did not make sense to him; portraying gods as if they were humans was "heartily disturbing" he said. Like Mona, he felt frustrated by his inability to effectively counter-argue the teacher's reasoning:

Gods can't be inferior; you can't just say that. And when you say to the doctor uh I think that because the gods love something, it becomes pious, then the uh the doctor says "well um gods can be in discord, so the same things that are loved are the same things that are hated", so I think I mean both pious and impious. You have experience, that is not fair, that is not fair, so she just drives you to her answer, to her opinion in a really, I mean it's a very sophisticated argument but she drives you to her opinion even if you don't agree with it. (Yassin/Interview)

During his second interview, Yassin reported that he had decided to avoid getting into arguments with the professor for fear of offending her, and to deal with the concepts as only "academic stuff" that he had to learn for the sake of passing the course:

> It doesn't make sense, and when you write that in an exam, you know you are writing it for an academic person only, but it's just you know it's not right. I, I, it's very, to explain; I don't like most of the time to go into conversations about gods in class because uh I might say something uh really uh that that might offend the doctor, so, so most of the time when I do, it's just, I just keep it inside me and I avoid totally interactions. I know the stuff in and out just for the purpose of knowing it for the course. (Yassin/Interview 2)

Aya's beliefs were challenged in relation to an unexpected course, Political Science, during an out-of-class casual conversation with the professor who questioned her religious beliefs, including the existence of God:

> He told me "a lot of children dies [!]every day; millions of children dies [!] every day, and do you think that who you call him God is supposed to be protecting those children? If this is your God, Kick him out". Oh my God, I told him um please I respect your point of view about not believing in God but I don't, I don't want to hear these words from you because I believe in Him, and I *ya'any* it's (laughter) I think I don't know what I said but *ya'any* I got nervous. Bye-bye for now *a'shan ana* [because I] I can't *ya'any* keep this conversation. He laughed and "please don't misunderstand me", OK, OK, I told him OK I have a class. (Aya/Interview)

Aya, like Mahmoud and Yassin, was offended and shocked by some concepts that contradicted her religious creed:

> um uh and he told me that Islam uh was spread by uh wars and killing people, blood and so and so. *ultelo* [I told him] of course not, you have to read history, the real history not the Western history, and he told me that uh, he asked me if they made *ya'any* um obliged [imposed] taxes on people who didn't enter Islam. Uh he told me this is bad and so and so. And *ya'any* our discussions got hot and at the end he told me I'm an atheist why you are *ya'any* exerting that effort *ya'any*, and I was surprised and I told him really?! And then I laughed and I asked him I don't know why you don't believe in God. (Aya/Interview)

However, when Aya overcame her initial shock, she also resorted to avoiding getting into arguments that she deemed unequal: “The teacher is always using philosophy; of course he's better than me in expressing his opinion philosophically. So, like he always win, he always wins, but one day I'll [win] (laughter).” (Aya/Interview)

Mahmoud used the same avoidance strategy by not getting into class arguments:

> We don't talk about it, no. We just, he just you know lectures us, and he tells us the proof, but then every now and then he says you can question everything that I tell you; you can you know, always question what I tell you; what I say may not be the truth. So, that's what I'm doing (laughter). (Mahmoud/Interview)

When asked why no one objects or counter-argues, Mahmoud first said that the students were not brave enough. But when I asked him why he himself did not counter-argue, he said:

> MAHMOUD: Because I, it's not, I don't know, hold on, let me think about it. Why I didn't say that. Hem. […] In mind, yeah. One, I'm not the type of person who would interrupt a class and say my opinion, like if I want to talk to him, I'll talk to him after class or before class because I don't believe in interrupting class, that's number one. Number two, um I'd rather look into it first and have back up when I argue, so I would know what to say rather than him just telling me this, this, and that, and I just nod along and say no. He's like where's your back-up?
>
> SANAA: So, you feel like you're not qualified yet to counter-argue?
>
> MAHMOUD: Yeah. what he's gonna tell me or what they're gonna tell me.
>
> SANAA: OK. But it irritates you.
>
> MAHMOUD: It does. I'm in a very confused position of where I stand. I'm studying these things but I know like it's not exactly what it is right now.

> So it's uh I don't like the class to be honest, I don't like the class. (Mahmoud/Interview)

Mahmoud was obviously undergoing an identity crisis, a phase of confusion and shipwreck that he described as “weird”:

> Weird, actually weird, I don't know what to, I don't know where, what fits where according to religion, biology, ethics, I don't know. I'm trying to paint the picture, so I'm still working on that image. (Mahmoud/Interview 2)

This exposure to alternative worldviews that challenged their current religious beliefs pushed the students to verify those beliefs in light of newly-found knowledge.

***5.3.3.2 Questioning*.** Mahmoud explained his religious identity disruption and ensuing search for answers as follows:

> MAHMOUD: I'm trying to research as much, I'm trying to read as much as I can from the [text]book, from [outside]resources, but nothing fits again, nothing coincides; I'm just, I'm irritated.
>
> SANAA: It irritates you.
>
> MAHMOUD: It's irritating, it's very irritating. I mean last semester we were just beginning to scratch the subject very well, so it was a bit ambiguous, but right now we're in it, so I'm still trying to find out what's going on, how it's going on, but I'm against it [evolution] and I don't like it.
>
> ….
>
> SANAA: When you say I'm confused, is it confusing your way of seeing evolution?
>
> MAHMOUD: No, it's confusing my way of seeing everything. Like I know what's in the Quran and I know what's being said, but I look here and I see the falsehoods or whatever, the proof of what's going on and I say OK [unintelligible]. And a lot of books about this, about science and Islam.

SANAA: Yeah.

MAHMOUD: It's how they reconcile, they don't contradict each other.

SANAA: So you're trying to find where they reconcile.

MAHMOUD: the middle ground. (Mahmoud/Interview 2)

Mahmoud was engaged in a continuous process of "question[ing] current self-understanding, and engag[ing] in behaviors that either validate identity beliefs or offer opportunities for changing or expanding those beliefs" (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010, p. 85). In fact, by round three, Mahmoud, like other students with a highly-ranked religious identity, seemed to have reached a compromise and a clear sense of his religious identity achievement, a term based on Marcia's work explained in the literature review chapter. They seemed to have passed the confusion and to have worked out and redefined what it meant to them to be a good Muslim/Christian.

***5.3.3.3 Increased tolerance.*** After Mahmoud's initial confusion about his religious belief in creationism and the scientific evidence that seemed to contradict creationism in favour of evolution, he went through a process of searching for a logical explanation of this divergence between religion and science, only to reach a compromise:

MAHMOUD: Yeah, uh I think I did find it; I think I did find it; um I, I, I learned that there is a ..there is change, inevitable change and that happens to species through whatever; I accepted that part.

SANAA: Ok. And you don't think it contradicts your religious beliefs?

MAHMOUD: I don't think so, and even if it does I don't think I wanna dwell too much into it. (Mahmoud/Interview 3)

Aya also reached a compromise between her definition of who she thinks she should be as a good Muslim and how she initially dealt with challenges to that definition. She explained that she had come to AUC from a different

environment that was judgmental, so when she joined AUC she was afraid to be judged as a "bad girl", if for instance she allowed a male student to call her *habibty* [babe], but now she had become less worried about people's judgment. She came to view religion and being religious differently, as an inner matter and came to think of subjects like not shaking hands with males as "trivial" issues that do not really make a difference:

> AYA: It's not hijab or the beard or the moustache who will, who will people judge me about this, uh it's something deeper inside. uh and when you believe in something from the inside you'll show it obviously before the others. […]
>
> SANAA: So, what caused this change, this shift of perspective?
>
> AYA: Ok, you know it's like uh um, ok it's like the world is a circle, and each one of us is making his own circle. OK? And uh it's like I get out, got out from my circle and looked at the other circles. And it's like my circle, my circle is really uh narrow.
>
> SANAA: Your initial circle was narrow.
>
> AYA: Yeah. And it's like the world, the world out there is burning and we are, we are thinking about trivial things. That's what I felt, you know? […] *ya'any* OK she doesn't like to shake the others' hands, uh OK. I don't like it, but what I think is that OK uh that I made something good for the others, this will make a difference. That what I'm thinking about now. uh If I helped others, uh within myself am I honest within myself? I think this will affect me and affect others, uh *bas* [that's all]. (Aya/Interview 3)

She came to the realization that her world was "really narrow" and modified her definition of a good Muslim from one that focused on "trivial things" like shaking hands with males to one that was more concerned with making a difference in the world through helping others and being honest.

On the other hand, Aya decided to stop arguing with her ARIC teacher who reportedly presented inaccurate information about Islam to his class, for

instance that Muslims have to give 25% of their money as *zakah*[3].She also started reading about Islamic history and philosophy. On the other hand, she stopped feeling offended, and instead started taking the ARIC teacher's "ignorance" with a sense of humour. When I interviewed Aya at the end of her first year at the AUC, she was very much accepting of difference of beliefs and lifestyles; for instance, she was no longer shocked by a foreign teacher's homosexuality as she had been at the beginning of the year when she expressed total disbelief and shock: "Oh my God! My teacher is a gay, oh my God!" Although she still opposed his sexual orientation and believed it to be in contradiction with Islamic values and teachings, she, nevertheless, seemed more accepting:

> But at first I was disgusted like I feel disgusted, but y*a'any* hemm I told myself never mind, you're here just to learn, he's, it's his business ya'any, never mind. (Aya/Interview 2)

She no longer took the matter at heart; she now viewed her exposure to different thoughts and concepts as a learning experience:

> maybe because he's not an Egyptian or [he is] an European person, so I don't mind, but because he's like, he's from the West, so OK. But when I was at school, I feel like those people [homosexuals] are from another world, it's not in ours. But here ya'any I feel already I'm in a different world, but it's nice, it's not that bad. I'm, I'm acquiring experiences, so OK no problem (laughter). (Aya/Interview 2)

Apparently, Aya had become more accepting of different beliefs and behaviours. She now saw diversity at AUC as *"an advantage"* not available outside it (Aya/ Focus group). She started viewing difference as a positive

[3]*Zakah* is one of the five pillars of Islam whereby financially-able Muslims give an annual 2.5% tax on their wealth to the needy.

experience, thus resolving the identity conflict she had been going through at first.

**5.3.4 Religious identity resolution**. By the second round of interviews which took place at the beginning of the participants' second semester at the AUC, the three students who were initially worried about their religiosity reported that their initial fears had been exaggerated. They had realized their power as agents who can choose the type of friends they wanted to spend their time with at the AUC, and had already started developing strategies to affirm and negotiate their religious identity while dealing with different AUC groups.

***5.3.4.1 Realizing the power of agency*.** The students have become consciously aware that they are not passive recipients but rather active agents who have the capacity to make conscious choices and select the type of friends they wanted to spend their time with and the environment they wanted to be part of. Yassin whose father played an important role in his religious identity construction highlighted his individual choice or agency in the following excerpt:

> It's more of, I'm not boasting but I think it's myself too. I'm just encouraging myself, just, I know if I do something I'll feel uh, when, when, you see uh God has given us a compass inside, when we do something wrong we usually feel quite hot and you feel your face getting red and it burns. I hate that feeling a lot, and when I do something wrong, um it just, I automatically know it's wrong. I don't wanna feel that feeling and I know that if I do something wrong, I will be held to account some way or another. I'll be either suffering for something in this life or in the next, so as not to deal with any of that at all, I just don't do it right now. So, it's more of an internal motivation. (Yassin/Interview 3)

Yassin realized that in an initially-challenging environment such as the AUC, he still had the choice to avoid behaviours incompatible with his religion, and that the environment did not really matter if one was confident enough in one's

religion and one's self-control. Religious identity and the urge to maintain it guided the choice of friends for the four highly religious participants (Yassin, Mahmoud, Aya, Marina):

> I've learned from day one at AUC that if you wanna be good, it's irrelevant, I mean your environment; I mean they wanna be bad, it's their fault; they're suffering not you; you don't care about them, but of course pressure groups do affect you but I mean pick your friends well. Your friends at the end of the day are who you spend your time with. (Yassin/Interview 1)

Similarly, Mahmoud stressed the power of agency through choosing one's friends:

> MAHMOUD: It's not as bad as it seems, it's not as bad as it seems because everywhere you go, you're gonna find good stuff and bad stuff.
>
> SANAA: And it's up to you too surround yourself with people whom you feel comfortable with
>
> MAHMOUD: Comfortable with. (Mahmoud/Interview)

The students' agency awareness and ability to choose became more obvious during the focus group discussion. Repeatedly, the participants stressed that identity construction in general depends on individual agency. They highlighted choice and personality traits, namely the level of one's self-confidence and self-control, as important agency factors:

> MAHMOUD: I think it depends on self control and on character. If you have self control and you have character, then you can do what you want anywhere you want. (Mahmoud/Focus group)
>
> ***
>
> YASSIN: So, if you're confident of yourself and you know what you're doing, and if it's right and you know that no matter who gets in my way there is only me and my God and that's what matters, you're gonna be forced to do the right things
>
> AYA: So, we get to the first point that it depends on yourself

ALIA: On who you are (Focus group)

Aya and Yassin have both become very assertive about their religious identities in the face of the feeling of being different “an outcast” and judged “the ugly duckling” that they experienced at the beginning:

> It turned out that I wasn’t the ugly duckling; they were the ugly ducklings. So if you’re confident of yourself and you know what you’re doing and if it’s right and you know that no matter who gets in my way there is only me and my God and that’s what matters you’re gonna be forced to do the right things. (Yassin/Focus group)
>
> ***
>
> So, come on guys all of you go to hell (laughs) […] The conclusion I reached is that I will do what I want. (Aya/Focus group)

Both Aya and Yassin reached the conclusion that they were going to do what they wanted regardless of the environment. When Aya said “all of you go to hell” she was referring to people who would judge her religious practices and beliefs, be they more liberal or more strict than she was.

***5.3.4.2 Identity enhancement.*** As explained earlier, some of the academic concepts the students were exposed to at AUC triggered a feeling of helplessness and frustration (identity confusion) that was followed by a stage of identity exploration. Those feelings of confusion and frustration pushed the students to further explore their religious identity by educating themselves about Islam in order to present it properly and counter-argue effectively, which in turn enhanced their religious identity.

Some students who were initially shocked by certain Western worldviews eventually used the tools provided by that same Western liberal education to reinforce and negotiate their religious identity. Aya, for example, decided to educate herself more about Islam after her Scientific Thinking teacher advised her not to use religion as an argument because it would weaken her argument if

her opponents do not share her religious beliefs. She started to read Quran in English to acquire the vocabulary she needed to defend Islam when dealing with non-Arabic speaking foreigners, and began to read philosophical books about Islam like Averroes's. Aya also sought opportunities to get exposed to her opponents' ideas in order to better understand them and consequently get more prepared to refute them in a critical and scientific manner. For instance, she watched videos by atheists:

> who are attacking Islam, and *ya'any* it's obvious that they are liars *ya'any*, but I have *ya'any* I have to, to make feelings *ya'any* in a side [put feelings aside] and like using scientific thinking that we're taking now. (Aya/Interview)

This search for knowledge enhanced her religious identity, so much so that she felt she was receiving divine guidance and support to counter-argue atheists' claims. She emotionally recounted an instance when she found by chance a TV programme "*barnameg reh'la ila al-yaqin [A Journey to Certitude programme]*. This TV programme was presented by Moez Masoud and broadcast on CBC channel in Ramadan 2012. Its 28 episodes covered several issues including the existence of the creator, why were we created? Darwin and certitude, modern science and certitude (Masoud, 2012). Moez Masoud is himself an AUC graduate and is currently studying for a PhD in Cambridge university. Encountering this programme by chance was believed by Aya to be a "gift from God":

> AYA: It's like we had, we had the same thoughts, I don't know how (laughing). It slightly organized my thoughts. He said that the atheists will say one, two, three and he said the same what my doctor, the atheist one, said. The atheists will say one, two, three. And he didn't you know bias [label] them as "the atheists," "the bad guys", no. He, it's like they have the right to be atheist because one, two, three. But they are wrong

cause one, two, three. So it's like the, he didn't *ya'any* bias them or put them in the black list.

SANAA: I see.

AYA:I like his way of, you know, of discussing the thing, and it's like he put for me big points. First you have to uh, it's like he gave me the headlines and then I searched for it. So it's like a gift from God or something.

SANAA: From God, that programme came just in time.

AYA: Just what I want (laughing).

SANAA: Yeah.

AYA: Yeah, and before Ramadan I prayed God "Allah please I don't know what to do", I feel like I have the spirit but I don't know from where I should start. And then by coincidence I saw, uh in Ramadan I don't watch TV. Generally, I like reading Quran, praying, uh it's like to be separate from the world and then I come back after a month, guys, but uh by coincidence I saw the programme." (Aya/Interview)

Aya spoke with great excitement about divine guidance to run into the programme at the time she was looking for answers. Watching that programme made her more prepared to discuss and refute atheists' claims, but it also boosted her spirituality as she felt more connected to God who put the programme in her way as she habitually did not watch TV in Ramadan in order to devote her time to reading Quran. The feeling of receiving divine guidance and protection is one of the signs of identity achievement (Kiesling & Sorell, 2009).

AUC helped those students whose religious identity initially ranked high, and who felt AUC as a threat to that identity, enhance their religious identity through increasing prayers, seeking like-minded people, educating themselves on religious matters, and developing greater acceptance of difference as they

gained more knowledge of and confidence in their religious position. One of these students is Yassin who explained how being an AUC student made him more religious:

> I think I've become more religious than, than before, because before I wasn't scared of anything; now I'm scared so I'm taking precautions. That, that I think has helped. *(*Yassin/Interview 2)

***

> When I came to AUC I was afraid that AUC will make me different. It just pushed me to the opposite; it just made me try my best just to take care of it and I tried to make sure that my religion was not gonna be influenced and sometimes I did things a bit over; I know I was very concerned and after a while I just discovered that hey I should be myself. If I do know that what I am doing is right then it doesn't matter who I am gonna go against. (Yassin/Focus group)

Mahmoud who changed his major from Biology to Arabic and Islamic Studies clarified that overcoming AUC challenges to his religious identity has enhanced his religious identity. He illustrated with the following example:

> Someone asked me "Oh, why is it wrong to shake hands with women?" And I was like "Oh, I don't know that myself; I need to check". (Mahmoud/Interview 3)

Aya reflected on how AUC shaped her religious identity by revealing her ignorance about several religion-related matters and thus pushing her to search for information, especially when discussing religion with non-Muslim foreigners:

> After entering AUC um I involved in some discussions about Islam and I felt like oh God I don't know uh deep information about my religion. […] Beside my classes *ya'any* it's like when I went, when I hanged out with the American tourists [American exchange students] and they asked me some questions about the, about my religion, and you know the they even know about prophet Mohamed's life. […] And they know deep deep

> uh stories about his life and it's like they know, so I have to know more.And to convince uh, in today's world is to convince the other scientifically, so now I'm searching about my religion scientifically, about the scientific things not the emotional things. And *uh bas* [that's all], and you know what surprised me they either know about the slander incident [*hadithat al-ifk*] and they asked me about it. And I thank God cause I, just two days before this discussion, I read about it in details. I know, I know, I knew about it before in details but thank God (laughing). So they're like "what do you know about it?" uh *fel-waqea'* [actually] (laughter) I don't know. *fa bas keda* [So that's all]. So my goal now is to search about my religion in scientific thinking. (Aya/Interview 3)

Marina's religious identity has become more prominent as a result of interacting with Muslims and talking about religion and answering their questions about the Church and the Sunday school.

On the other hand, some students, like Elham, exploited the opportunities offered by this exposure to alternative worldviews to examine their own values and beliefs in order to reinforce them. Elham did not feel the same degree of anger or confusion as Aya and Mahmoud. She explained how the Philosophical Thinking course would help her strengthen the foundations of her religious beliefs:

> mainly we talk more about the, about how Socrates used to believe in gods and his ideas and his beliefs, and the professor keeps saying that you can't get to philosophy while you, like, while you're holding on religion but you can get to religion through philosophy; you can't do the opposite. So it's good to think of that because it's good to have a basis to what you believe in.(Elham/Interview)

It is worth-noting that Elham had already been exposed to Western ideas like scepticism, atheism and evolution through an educational program she had participated in and through watching TED Talks prior to joining AUC. Her

previous exposure to these worldviews was a mediating factor in her religious identity construction and negotiation.

As to students who viewed religion as a private matter in a Western-like manner (Alia and Heba), they took religion out of the equation at AUC as Alia explained:

> For me when it comes to religion, it's not something that you put out to discussion. Your relationship with God, first it's none of anybody's business; second it shouldn't be influenced by anybody; it's sacred (Alia/Focus group)

***5.3.4.3 Identity agents.*** Identity agents are "the developing individual's partners-in-identity-formation or their co-constructers of identity" (Schachter & Ventura, 2008, p. 454). These agents are key factors that "facilitate[e] the process of religious identity formation" (Chaudhury & Miller, 2008, p. 397) such as parents, peers, and religious organizations. Participants who underwent a religious identity crisis had recourse to some or all of the following identity agents to help them resolve that crisis, namely family support, students' clubs with a religious orientation, and religious rituals.

***Family.*** Students who felt their religious identity threatened sought support from their parents and close family members such as a grandparent or a sibling, by sharing their AUC stories with them and seeking their advice. Marina regularly called her family on the phone despite the high phone bills, and talked to her sisters for long periods of time. Aya reported sharing her stories about teachers and courses with both her mother and her grandfather who became a source of reassurance for her. For example, when she shared with them the story of the allegedly homosexual teacher, they reacted in a very calm manner:

> they told me never mind. And my grandfather as well, he went to, like, half of the countries in the world. (Aya/Interview)

Yassin as well sought family support by daily Skype calls with his family back in Saudi Arabia. In his joking tone and amusingly exaggerated manner, Yassin said:

> If you check me on Skype you'll find me probably on from six up till two and I'm talking with them from six up till two. We just keep it on, so like we close Skype it's like [unintelligible] eight hours or something; it's crazy but I think, I think I'm abusing Skype, and I think they might sue me, but (laughter). (Yassin/Interview)

Although Yassin talked to his mother and sisters as well, his father was the main source of religious support for him. He would give him advice on different situations he faced:

> So my dad is coming to the room and he says “you're looking [unintelligible]” and he's just like “what happened today?” He tells me something and then I tell him something and he says well you should do this and that and religiously and take care of your religion and uh he constantly reminds me, and that in itself, you know, just, it just helps me keep intact. (Yassin/Interview)

For Mahmoud and Marina, the other two students with a very prominent and salient religious identity, family was not the main source of support in constructing their religious identity at AUC. They depended on increasing their religious practices and on safe havens like religious institutions and students’ clubs whose central interest is religion.

***Safe havens*.** Another identity agent that played an important role in the students’ construction of their religious identity are the students’ clubs and religious organizations; “safe havens […] where they felt ‘connected’ or able to express and cultivate [their] personal beliefs” (Chaudhury & Miller, 2008, p. 401). Yassin, Elham and Mahmoud chose to join clubs with a religious touch, that Alia once called the “Islamic” clubs. These clubs, Resala AUC and Help

Club are two community service clubs. Yassin described the latter as a safe haven:

> the help club, the best thing about it is that it matches the ideology that I had entered the AUC with. When I came here I was like I'm here to study and to preserve my religion. Religion is a risk over here, so you have to be really careful about the choices you make and the people you befriend. At the Help Club, they know that, and, and as such, it's the only club at AUC where uh girls and guys don't interact directly. Um, yeah, if the interactions happen, it's by email just to send a particular document to them or to get a particular document from them.um our activities sometimes we do really fun stuff, like we have soccer tournaments and sometimes we go and we hear a lesson from a particular person, a religious figure; we bring a religious figure to, to campus. So, we do different things. uh and uh that has just helped me you know stay intact, they just remind me that there are many others around me who have the same goal, and that's important. You have to know that there are other people out there. *(*Yassin/Interview)

The Help club was a safe identity-check oasis for Yassin. It reassured him that he was not the odd person he was sometimes made to feel outside the club when he would say he did not shake hands with females, for instance. The Help Club also allowed Yassin to build new friendships with students who shared his religious orientation. Mahmoud also surrounded himself with like-minded people in some students' clubs. He attended a number of religious lectures organized by "Serenity Society", a students' club whose mission as stated on its Facebook page is "Reviving the Islamic spirit" (Serenity, 2017) Aya, too, joined similar clubs where she met like-minded students who shared her religious views, like Sabeel a students' club that describes itself on its Facebook page as "A community that works towards establishing a closer relationship with our

religion and the building of a nation through science, knowledge and wisdom" and whose mission is:

> To create a generation of science leaders who appreciate science, believe in its crucial role in developing nations, are aware of our society's strong need of scientific figures who will lead our nation to progress, and who are willing to spread a new mindset of science that is based on our culture to the whole world, emphasizing the fact that science and religion are not odds. (Sabeel, 2017)

In their struggle with a myriad of identity issues, post-adolescents "often turn to peers for assistance in working through situations" (Mullikin, 2006, p. 184). The students' involvement with these religion-oriented students' clubs "provided just such a social context and narrative space in which to develop a religious identity" (Peek, 2005, p. 228).

Sometimes the students looked for safe havens outside AUC. Both Mahmoud and Yassin joined a non-AUC group called "SuperMuslims" that organized several charity events for orphans, cancer patients, etc. On the other hand, besides the AUC Bible study group that was her main support network, Marina sought refuge in a nearby church during her first semester at AUC. The Bible study group was particularly crucial for Marina during her first semester at AUC when she was worried about maintaining her religious identity at a high level. The group had become almost her sole resource centre even for issues unrelated to religion such as the courses she should take and the teachers she should avoid. However, starting the second semester the Church became her sole major safe haven. Moreover, as she became more confident about her religious identity and as she realized that the threat she perceived at first was exaggerated, she began to depend more on herself for spiritual development:

MARINA: Now it's, they're, they're just like any other friends, you know. […] Last semester I did feel like it helped with spiritually but now I'm feeling it's more of a community than a spiritual thing.

SANAA: How did it help last semester?

MARINA: Because we used to go for like uh for example Mondays we would pray; Thursdays they'd be Bible study, so even though like I still go to those things right now, I feel like I could get more done spiritually on my own time without having to discuss it with someone else or that kind of thing or with my priest for example. So now it's more of a community. (Marina/Interview)

***Increasing religious rituals***. Another source of support for religious identity construction was increasing prayers and religious rituals, especially at the very beginning of the academic year when the threat felt highest. Yassin explained how he *"started increasing everything like a tenfold"* because he *"was scared"* but then came back to normal:

> I was protecting myself; I was like if you don't say everything ten times, everything you used to say before, you're gonna die somewhere, so you have to say it (laughter), so that's what I used to do. But then after a while I was like don't worry, you can come back to normal, then I came back to normal. When a situation happens to me, um that, that, that distresses me or something, I increase it again. When my phone was stolen, I started increasing it. And so I adjust myself according to the situation I'm in and the particular feelings I'm feeling at that time. (Yassin/Interview)

Mahmoud was attending week-end Quran classes at a mosque in which he learned to read and memorize Quran. He also regularly fasted Mondays and Thursdays, which is an optional fasting that was practiced by Prophet Mohamed. Aya read and listened to Quran in the dorms frequently.

This was not the case for Elham who ranked her religious identity first on the prominence hierarchy and reported reading and listening to Quran in the first interview. Elham reported difficulty in performing her five prayers on time, and ranked her religious identity second and then last on the prominence hierarchy in her second and third interviews respectively:

> No, it actually, it gets harder sometimes for the prayer times because here there is no mosque nearby, so it's hard for me to know when exactly should I pray. I have it on my cell phone but like I don't always have my cell phone next to me, so I kind of like sometimes I forget doing something and then I forget ok what's the time? Should I pray? I have to check every time. So it's kind of harder than being at home. (Elham/Interview 3)

Elham explained the decrease of her religious rituals by being away from home, although when I asked her if being away from home played a role in the way she was constructing her religious identity, she replied that she was not sure because even when she was still at home, she was constructing her religious identity on her own:

> because even at home I was constructing my religious identity my own way. Maybe they have an effect but I'm not very sure of, because still I feel that everything that's affecting my religious identity is because of me not because of like anyone else. (Elham/Interview 3)

## 5.4 National Identity

In this section, I present the findings related to national identity construction and negotiation among freshman AUC students. These findings draw on data collected between August 2011 and September 2012, a few months after the onset of the 25 January 2011 Revolution in Egypt, a major turning point in modern Egyptian history (See Chapter II for a more detailed account of the Egyptian Revolution in relation to AUC). The Revolution and the ensuing political events have had a noticeable impact on the Egyptians' sense of patriotism and national identity, and AUC students are no exception. Thus, the findings of this study, particularly with regards to national identity, must be understood in the context of this particular and challenging moment in Egyptian history; they would probably have been different had the study been conducted before the Revolution.

Table 8 below lists the themes and sub-themes related to national identity:

*Table 8*

*List of Themes and Sub-themes Related to National Identity*

| **Themes** | **Sub-themes** |
|---|---|
| Resurrection of national identity (2011 Revolution) | • Interest and participation (voting) in Egyptian politics<br>• Sense of ownership of Egypt<br>• National pride |
| Religion and national identity | • Religion as important component of national identity<br>• Unachieved national identity partially due to religion (Heba) |
| Identity crisis | • No crisis<br>  ○ Identity rather stable (no change in environment compared to school)<br>• National identity questioned by others because of language<br>• Disappointment with Egypt<br>• Academics-related crisis<br>  ○ Misinformed non-Egyptian Egyptology teacher (Aya) |
| Identity negotiation | • Modifying linguistic practices to position oneself as Egyptian<br>• Redefining the link between language and national identity<br>• Avoiding discussion with misinformed teacher till more knowledgeable<br>• Community service/ students' clubs |
| Identity resolution/enhancement | • Not resolved / still in exploration stage (Heba)<br>• Resolved/enhanced<br>  ○ Exposure to "Egyptian stuff" music and art<br>  ○ Less defensive<br>  ○ Being taught by a proud Egyptian (Marina)<br>  ○ Enhanced through community service |

**5.4.1 The Resurrection of national identity**. Because of the Revolution, the interviewed students became more concerned about Egyptian politics and felt an unprecedented revival of nationalistic pride and willingness to make Egypt a better country than they did before the Revolution. Several showed an interest in Egyptian politics for the first time in their lives; they started reading newspapers to follow political news, and like millions of fellow Egyptians went out to clean the streets from the trash that piled up during the 18 days of the Revolution, and voted in several elections because they now felt that their voices mattered, that they regained ownership of their country. Guibernau (2007) explained that "national identity may remain buried for years and can be resurrected at times of crises or major historical turning points" (as cited in Bassiouney, 2014, p. 82). In the following three excerpts, Nardine, Mona, and Elham reported an unmistakably renewed sense of nationalism and resurrected national identity:

> Before the Revolution, I wasn't reading or even listening to the News Bulletin. Now I'm into all T.V channels, ON TV, AL Hayat and others … I'm more interested now. At school, there would be a political discussion inside class, I'd keep silent, not even sharing views or anything. [Translation mine] (Nardine/Interview)
>
> ***
>
> ELHAM: And uh regarding the revolution and what happens in Tahrir square and all of these events and the elections, I don't know but I feel like now I kind of I'm following what's happening; I'm just trying to follow what's happening in Egypt. I'm more interested; it's not boring as before.
>
> SANAA: uhuh. Do you mean like follow the news? or uh how do you follow?
>
> ELHAM: Follow, follow the elections, what happens in the elections, sometimes I watch the debates and listen to what people say about what happens.
>
> SANAA: Ok.

ELHAM: Yeah I'm getting in arguments with my friends or something like that, we discuss

SANAA: Presidential elections?

ELHAM: Yes some of them want to, not all of them want to vote for uh Moussa or Shafiq, but some of them want to vote for, some of them wanted to vote actually for Hazem Abou Ismail before; some now they want to vote for Morsi; someone voted for uh Hamdeen Sabbahi and Abou El-Fotouh, and other people were like "No we're not gonna vote. We're not gonna vote at all; we think that nothing will change, and we're not gonna vote". I think that's the most negative part of it. (Elham/Interview)

***

Yeah, and I think the revolution got everyone even more attached. I never thought I'd be, I actually cried about the revolution when I heard about all these people who died but I never thought I'd actually feel that way about it, but like I did; we were all depressed at home. (Mona/Interview)

Elham, who participated in the "Friday of Wrath" demonstrations on 28th January 2011 recounted how the Revolution pushed her to reconsider the negative view she held towards living in Egypt and made her feel "*more Egyptian":*

Before it was like for me, I'm coming from Egypt it wasn't about like Egypt or being an Egyptian, it was about being Elham more, but after the revolution it was like more about being Egyptian like for all my life I was thinking that I have to raise my children in a better cleaner place and I always had that place in mind that it was Istanbul always […] But after the revolution, I feel like ok there are people who want to change Egypt as me, so we're going to work together in order to change it if, I shouldn't go and live in Istanbul, I should create Istanbul here in Egypt. So, I'm feeling more Egyptian now. (Elham/Interview)

The above quotes from the interviews show how noticeably high the students' national feelings and pride were at the beginning of this study, as was the case for most Egyptians. However, following a number of political events, those feelings gradually gave way to alternating waves of hope and disappointment. Consequently, several students started having enough of political discussions:

> MAHMOUD: Sometimes the teacher would uh, psychology class again.
>
> SANAA: Again.
>
> MAHMOUD: Psychology class, when she makes fun of the *Ikhwan* [Muslim Brotherhood]; she's like "I'm not voting for them", and then we're like "Oh let's not talk about politics and just leave politics out of the thing, uh out of the class reference. (Mahmoud/Interview)

This was the case for many Egyptians due to the deep divide in public opinion that oftentimes led to serious conflicts between friends and family members about the merit of the Revolution and about which party's presidential candidate should govern the country, the Muslim Brotherhood or a secular party, a divide fuelled by longstanding questions of identity, namely whether Egypt is Islamic or secular; "the fundamental problem of whether Egypt should be an Islamic state or a secular one, which in turn raised the issue of whether the principles of government should be derived from Islam or the example of the European nation-states" (Mondal, 2003, p. 239). As such, the whole country was going through an identity crisis.

This divide made some teachers, including myself, cautious to neither let class discussions get too heated nor divulge their political stance:

> MONA: Yeah. The thing about the professors; most of them don't even tell you what they think or their point of view; they kind of stay out of it as much as possible even if like a discussion like starts in class and some students start like not yelling but like you know how

SANAA: Arguing

MONA: Yeah they get overexcited; most of the professors they like just stay out of it. Do you do that in your classes or do you actually tell them what you think?

SANAA: No I don't. (Mona/Interview)

It is amid this political upheaval and resurrected national feelings that the present research was conducted and the participants constructed and negotiated their national identities. The next section attempts to analyse and synthesize the participants' trajectories of national identity construction and negotiation at the AUC during these times of political and national transition. As Edwards (2009) has contended "times of transition 'whether welcomed or imposed are also times of renewed self-examination'" (as cited in Bassiouney, 2014, p. 81).

**5.4.2 National identity crisis.** The first noticeable difference in the participants' trajectories of national identity construction is that some students underwent various degrees of national identity crisis, while others did not; the latter seemed to navigate AUC and the political events quietly (Alia, Mona, Mahmoud, Khaled). These students did not perceive any challenges to their national identity, those whose Egyptian-ness was not questioned. One of these students is Alia who asserted her belonging to Egypt in the following excerpt:

> If I'm not Egyptian then who else could I be? *yaa'ny* I couldn't be anything else. I just, I grew up here, I lived with the people even though I hate some stuff about them I lived with them (laughter). (Alia/Interview)

Alia went on to justify the behaviours she hated about Egyptians, to find reasons for why her fellow Egyptians are now self-centred and selfish:

> I think that people here as I said before, they are just I don't know if, if I hate them or if I hate who they have come to be. That they haven't been

> educated and that they turn into people that you can't handle [deal] with. I hate that people are very...The prior, well the prior phase [Mubarak era] has made the people too selfish that they're only.. they don't have a chance to think about everybody else; they think about themselves and their needs […] because if they didn't think about their needs and how they're trying to, if there's, if there's a worker and he has to support his whole family, what is he supposed to do and he's eating 1000 pounds a month? What is he supposed to do? He's not going to think about anyone else. He's going to think about himself and how he's supposed to do his responsibilities. So, it's turning people into very self-centred selfish people. (Alia/Interview)

Alia was not the only one who did not undergo a national identity crisis. Among those who did not undergo a national identity crisis were also those students who have not lived in Egypt all their lives, yet have spent enough time in Egypt (Mahmoud, Khaled, Mona) and perhaps had resolved their national identity crisis prior to joining AUC. Mahmoud came back to Egypt from the US when he was 11; Mona came back from KSA two years ago, and Khaled had spent several years in Egypt before his family went to KSA. On the other hand, those who underwent a national identity crisis were Yassin, Heba, and Marina, a crisis related to language and/or disappointment with Egypt and Egyptians.

***5.4.2.1 Language-induced crisis.*** As detailed in the literature review chapter, the link between language and national identity is a very strong one. The findings of this study clearly indicate the strong bond between the Arabic language and the Egyptian identity; however, this seems to hold true only for ECA. The link between national identity and SA, well-established in the literature across the Arab World, did not seem to matter for the students. The only student for whom it did matter was Aya, whose main medium of instruction prior to joining AUC was SA, and who had been the least exposed to the English language and foreign education. Aya was in total disbelief when she

realized that some Egyptian students were not able to read and write SA properly:

> What, what irritates me um when Egyptians don't know how to write, how to write Arabic or how to read Arabic *ya'any*. They *ya'any*, at the beginning I thought they are *ya'any*, they are pretending that, like they are not baa, *ya'any* they don't know how to speak Arabic or to write Arabic, to show that "I'm a high-class person". But uh when I faced them with some papers, they really didn't know how to read and write in Arabic. And I told them "people you're Egyptian, you're Arabs, you have to be proud of your nationality and your identity. *ya'any* how to, when you read Quran *ya'any*, how do you read it?" And they told me "we don't read Quran or something; it's only with English and we deal with English people", not English people, "we deal with Western identities", so I think they have to know about their nationality and their identity. (Aya/Interview)

On the other hand, speaking ECA fluently was perceived by the students as a key indicator of Egyptian-ness. For Yassin who holds both the Canadian and Egyptian citizenships, speaking ECA is an important ingredient of being Egyptian. In contrast, speaking "broken" or "impure" Egyptian is to him equivalent to being less Egyptian. Despite his pride in being Canadian, he still presented himself as an Egyptian by referring to his descent *"*my dad is Egyptian,*"* but also because he "can speak Arabic":

> I'm Canadian. I was raised up in Canada and my Canadian part is more, more, the majority of my identity, but I'm still [Egyptian]; my dad is Egyptian and I can speak Arabic*.* (Yassin/Interview)

However, Yassin was constantly reminded by people around him of his less-than-optimal proficiency in ECA, which made him feel less of an Egyptian than those who master the language:

> YASSIN: I know how to speak Arabic well but I don't know how to speak Colloquial Arabic as well. And Colloquial Arabic is something that defines

> Egyptians. I mean you can tell out an Egyptian easily by their language. The fact that I don't know, that I don't have that ability to speak Colloquial Arabic as good as many others and that I have to ask for the meanings for lots of words um usually ends up me feeling less of an Egyptian than I'd necessarily feel if I knew some stuff.
>
> SANAA: So, is it the others who make you feel so, or do you initially feel so?
>
> YASSIN: I, I have, it's like, I have a seed and they just water it. They, I, there's a seed inside; it isn't growing and it's very dormant. They stimulate it with some water and some criticizing and some laughing. (Yassin/Interview)

The interviewees used language as a classification category; the language that their AUC peers chose to use was to them an indicator of their degree of "Egyptian-ness":

> When *an* Egyptian girl doesn't know how to phrase one Egyp… one Arabic sentence, and her parents are contributing to this, it's just, I think it's just wrong, because I haven't seen an American who doesn't know how to speak English or a German who doesn't know how to speak German. It pisses me off bas *yaany* [but I mean] I deal with it *khalas* that's the way they are, I accept them. (Alia/Interview)

Surprisingly, Yassin himself used language to categorize AUC students' Egyptian-ness:

> YASSIN: They still have this stupid desire to be uh like others, like foreigners, and they don't respect the fact that they're Egyptians. And they don't take, they speak English as their first language which is for some.. I know some were raised outside and those are exceptions, but for those that, people over here they speak Arabic and they have fun and they should be just more Egyptian; like they couldn't be American; they shouldn't try to blend in with the American system.
>
> SANAA: So do you think that by speaking English more than Arabic, I mean does that make them less of an Egyptian?

> YASSIN: It does, it does. I associate language theoretically with your national identity. um your language defines you at the end of the day. Your language usually tells where you're from. I mean you can tell out an Egyptian easily by his language. (Yassin/Interview)

Yassin obviously excluded himself from the “Egyptians are those who speak fluent ECA” rule on the grounds that he was raised abroad, the “exceptions” as he called them; thus, justifying to himself his being an Egyptian without being as fluent as “typical” Egyptians and despite using English as his first language.

Heba’s national identity crisis, however, was induced by a mixture of ECA incompetence and limited immersion in the Egyptian culture despite her living in Egypt all her life. She questioned her Egyptian-ness due to her “global” family that includes different nationalities:

> a very global family; that's how we are (laughter). So, it's very hard to say oh am I Egyptian? I mean I could beg to differ. (Heba/Interview)

In the three interviews that I conducted with Heba, national identity ranked last on her hierarchy of identities (national, religious, linguistic). Being Egyptian is just a fact about her, she said, not a source of any particular pride, not a driving force:

> HEBA: Yeah. The thing is, for me being Egyptian isn't like the driving force in my life, do you know what I mean?
>
> SANAA: What is the driving force for you?
>
> HEBA: No, I mean it's me as a person, I don't like, in general I like being different, I like being unique, I don't like being like everyone else. So when I say I am Egyptian I don't feel the extra, I don't feel like I'm anything, you know? Like I don't feel that sense of oh I am Egyptian [excited tone]! I just feel like oh I'm Egyptian [flat tone]. It's different. (Heba/Interview 3)

For Heba, the driving force is her personal identity and being a Hip-Hop dancer more than any other identity constituent. She seemed to be still in the identity-exploration stage of all three identities examined in this study:

> HEBA: The three of them are not a driving force, so they're not anything exceptionally, *ya'any* I'm not gonna go join the Go-for-Egypt club or go to the Help Club which is apparently the Muslim Club in disguise, I don't know I'm not I think I've covered it all.
>
> SANAA: What is your driving force?
>
> HEBA: I'll let you know when I know.
>
> SANAA: When you know? You're still in search for that.
>
> HEBA: Exactly, yeah. (Heba/Interview)

Regarding her national identity, she questioned the fact that she is an Egyptian:

> And even, even to say it [that she is an Egyptian] as a fact, is it a hundred percent true? You know what I mean? Because even *ya'any*, when I grew up it's very confusing when someone says hold on, you're Egyptian? And you hear *ya'any* you know a lot of, a group of your family are not speaking anything Egyptian. And even my family in general, for example in our family meetings, we don't do the traditional Egyptian culture things that everyone else does, because in my family, when we meet, we're a big family and that's the only Egyptian part of it […] so you never have that very typical Egyptian; this doesn't happen. (Heba/Interview 3)

Heba's questioning of her Egyptian identity was related to language first and to culture next. The fact that they used different languages and different colloquial Arabic vernaculars and that some of her extended family members did not speak ECA was for her enough reason to question her very Egyptian-ness; especially that her family "don't do the traditional Egyptian culture things that everyone else does."

***5.4.2.2 Disappointment-induced crisis*.** The second cause of national identity crisis for some participants was triggered by a discrepancy between the image that they had about Egypt and the actual reality of Egypt. Marina's national identity crisis was the result of disappointment with Egypt, an Egypt different from the one her parents talked about and the one she experienced during her short visits to Egypt:

> They reminded me, like every, they reminded me every, like we didn't consider ourselves as living in Kuwait, we were just we were Egyptians we were there for work for studies and we'd always come back, like this is how we still feel, we're always gonna still come back and this is our country, so they would just remind me that this isn't, like I never felt I belong anywhere else even when I was living there and studying there I don't know, I had a sort of *intimaa* [sense of belonging] like this is where I… (Marina/Interview)

When Marina moved to Egypt to study at the AUC, she compared the Egyptian society to Kuwait, a comparison that was in favour of Egypt (inner group) as better than Kuwait (the outer group):

> MARINA: Ok. I'm very proud of my heritage. I don't, I wouldn't know what it means to be Egyptian because I haven't lived here but I am I just I love my country so much and I feel like Egypt has everything and if it would be, if it was ruled right if the government was right it would honestly I believe that it would be the best country I think so right now. I mean the people are smart, we have a good, we have history, we have culture, we have traditions, we have like a lovely community, you know people are loved, I don't know it's a great community and I'm proud of that and being Egyptian for me means that I don't forget who I am wherever I go, if I go to Europe or the US, I'm like I introduce myself first as I'm Egyptian, yes because I'm proud of where I'm from.
>
> SANAA: Although you've never lived in Egypt.
>
> MARINA: Yeah. I think that makes me love it more because I've noticed that people here don't love Egypt as much as I do, like when I start

> talking I'm just like it's a great country. I mean we have everything, we have the pyramids, we have a good weather, it's from every side, it's just, and they're like you know what, it's not that great. I'm just like no I think it is (laughter). (Marina/Interview)

After a few months in Egypt, Marina's idealized view of Egypt gave room to a more realistic and critical one:

> The thing that bothers me when I think about Egyptians is just the..They don't have a lot of respect for time or organization or that kind of thing, so I think that would ..that's what bothers me most and makes me sort of you know it's a negative part of my culture but I wouldn't say it has a negative effect on me.(Marina/Interview)

Her disappointment was partially due to AUC not being a typical Egyptian environment. The AUC community she described is nothing like the community she used to interact with during her family visits to Egypt; it is richer, Westernized and liberal:

> As I said they're much richer. I haven't met anyone who is that like dependent on family and like their culture. They don't seem that proud of their heritage. I don't know I'm probably just passing judgments but I haven't, maybe it's cause I haven't met a lot of different . . .
>
> […]
>
> Just walking in the university I see everyone wearing sort of Western clothing, not that, like I know now everyone is wearing Western clothing but a girl at AUC wouldn't be able to walk outside [in] downtown Cairo and just like feel normal.
>
> SANAA: Pass unnoticed.
>
> MARINA: Yeah, exactly. So, it's very obvious that there's a difference in the way they talk, the way they move, like the females at AUC are obviously much more free, guys and girls together.
>
> SANAA: So, what do you mean by the way they talk? The language or the way?

MARINA: um, more the way not the language; I understand that, I, like a lot of people can speak English right now and they're fine with that, but just their movements, their sort of just the atmosphere about

SANAA: (unintelligible word)

MARINA: Yeah, exactly. Like I can talk, I can say whatever I want and I don't mind that. In Egypt that's not what people do.

[…]

MARINA: Yeah, or maybe that's becoming, this is what has become typical Egypt right now. I'm still trying to discover that (laughter) but the last time I saw Egypt it wasn't that liberal. *(*Marina/Interview)

Her view of AUC as an atypical Egyptian community was shared by Yassin:

> Over here [AUC] the, over here. It's true people have said to me before that it's very difficult for you to actually recognize your Egyptionality over here. It's very, you feel over here that it's not Egypt. That's what I've been told and it's true. (Yassin/Interview)

Marina and Yassin were unable to recognize their *"*Egyptionality", as Yassin put it, the Egypt they had experienced and heard about from their parents before joining AUC. They felt disappointed with AUC not offering the Egyptian experience they had wished for.

***5.4.2.3 Academically-induced Crisis*.** A third trigger for a national identity crisis was related to academics, and was experienced only by Aya who on different occasions felt extremely disturbed and irritated by her misinformed Egyptology professor, a non-Egyptian:

> AYA: In the Egyptology class, when I was in the Egyptology class (laughter), I felt like I want to tell the teacher please sit down; have a seat please (laughter). And all, of course all the people in the class were not Egyptians, just one person who was *ya'any* Egyptian uh and me, but all other students were not Egyptians; they were, they were not Arabs and

they want to know about, they're interested in Egyptian, in uh ancient Egyptian civilization. And I uh I like Egyptian, ancient Egyptian civilization and uh I felt like please have a seat and I'll explain everything *ya'any* (laughter) *bas ya'any* [but I mean].

SANAA: Because the teacher is not qualified?

AYA: No, no, no. She, she is not Egyptian. Sorry I didn't tell you that.

SANAA: OK.

AYA: She's not Egyptian and she's *ya'any*, it's like she didn't experience the *ya'any* the, she didn't go to all the sites and all the, and she didn't study the Egyptian civilization in her school, but I know, like I know everything, I know what you say *ya'any*. And sometimes I don't understand it because she *ya'any* she don't, *ya'any* she doesn't pronounce, like for example *Wadi Alhitan* [the valley of the whales] or something, she pronounce in strange way so I don't understand it. And she sometimes tell me *ya'any* you're supposed to know this, I tell her no I don't, and when I open the book I, ah you mean (laughter).

SANAA: You mean *Wadi Alhitan*, for instance. Ok.

AYA: OK. And uh and uh we discussed something uh I know that like *Ikhnaton* [Aknaton] uh wife was his sister and his wife, and she tells me no she wasn't his sister and the, *mesh a'arfa* [I don't know], they, then they married by incident, by accident and *ya'any* something like this *ya'any*. (Aya/Interview)

The fact that the teacher is not an Egyptian seems to be an important factor in Aya's distress and frustration about the teacher's inaccurate knowledge. Mostafa as well once expressed his frustration when an Egyptian TA [teacher assistant] made a negative comment about Egyptian students in front of their American teacher. Mostafa's main cause of frustration, he said, is that the criticism was in front of a non-Egyptian. From my own experience as a non-Egyptian living in Egypt, on numerous occasions when I criticized any aspect about Egypt, that Egyptians themselves criticize, I received harsh and

aggressive responses that an Egyptian would probably not have gotten had she made the same criticism.

**5.4.3 National identity resolution.** The students who underwent an identity crisis related to language resorted to a number of strategies to resolve that crisis and reaffirm their Egyptian-ness (Yassin, Heba, Mahmoud, Mona, Marina). First, as explained in the section on language identity, they reduced their use of English and increased their use of ECA, which improved their fluency and reduced the amount of unwanted attention they got. Second, to resolve the conflict between being Egyptian and not speaking fluent ECA, students redefined Egyptian-ness; they attached an appendix to the definition of an Egyptian, particularly when it came to language code choice and ECA fluency. They distinguished between *choosing* not to speak Egyptian Arabic and being *incapable* of doing so. Choosing not to speak ECA deliberately to project an upper-class Westernized identity was frowned upon and criticized as a sign of lack of pride in one's cultural and national identities; whereas being incapable of speaking ECA was tolerated and justified:

> I mean [being] Egyptian is not in a language or in anything; it's just, more important is the love of the country, but in a sense probably if they are that influenced by English, then by large then they are more influenced by the Western world which then means they don't love this country so much, so yeah it's debatable, you know. Yeah it can be. One guy he really loves the country but he just find English easier, then no it doesn't make him less Egyptian, but the other he speaks English because he's ashamed of that country; he's leaving it, so no that makes him less of an Egyptian; it depends. (Khaled/Interview)

Clearly, it is not speaking English in itself that mattered for the participants, but the motives behind doing so. In the following excerpt from an interview with Yassin, he referred to a spot on campus known as the Gucci corner, named so

because the students who typically spend their free time in it are allegedly the most Westernized ones in terms of dress code and language use, those dressed in designer clothes like Polo and Lacoste and carrying Gucci and Louis Vuitton bags:

> YASSIN: when I look outside into uh when I look at the Gucci corner, you know the Gucci corner, right? Yes?
>
> SANAA: Yes of course.
>
> YASSIN: That is definitely weird, definitely not in Egypt; definitely, no way. When I see that I'm not in Egypt, because they, I don't know if they're trying to do it intentionally or have they been dragged into it but they're not, they're not Arabs, they're not, I mean they talk English most of the time. I speak more Arabic than people over here. I don't know why, they're like, I mean most of my friends, they do speak Arabic, but girls, um, yeah girls I speak more Arabic than them which is weird because I'm the Canadian, I'm the one who's supposed to speak in English.
>
> SANAA: Yes, you're the native speaker.
>
> YASSIN: yeah, yeah and they're the ones who speak English so that's weird. They're not proud and, and, and it's really sad to see that fact. [unintelligible] different times and different measures. I'm not saying we're gonna ride camels, I'm not saying that, but at the same time I'm not saying that we wear, you know, skinny jeans and try to act, you know, all cool and Canadian or American and all that stuff. I mean I'm Canadian I'm not all happy." (Yassin/Interview)

Yassin's referral to the Gucci corner confirms that what he opposes is not the mere act of speaking in English, but rather the adoption of a largely Western lifestyle that includes speaking in English. Therefore, speaking English more than or instead of ECA is not a problem per se for Yassin and the other students; the problem is when some students do so out of lack of pride in their Egyptian culture and identity. In the following excerpt, Alia expressed her

resentment towards students whom she perceived as non-proud of their Egyptian culture and language:

> ALIA: they're Egyptians and they're always talking in English. That pisses me off. I can understand you talk in English when there's a foreigner, but when you're all Egyptians, for example one who doesn't know how to speak English well, he's being national, that's fine. As long as we don't use English all the time just because 'oh my God, we're very cool *ya'any*.[…] No, I don't get along with such people (laughter). I can deal with them a bit, yes I won't hate them *ya'any* but
>
> SANAA: Do you avoid them? Do you avoid hanging out with them?
>
> ALIA: I don't avoid, but I don't enjoy. *ya'any* it's like come on guys, there's no need for this we're-so-cool environment. Speak in Arabic; we're Egyptians. *'eshu 'eshet ahaliku* [you don't have to be stuck up] (laughter). (Alia/Interview)

Speaking English instead of ECA was thus frowned upon and saddening when it replaced ECA:

> ALIA: because we watch English movies and series, it's ok to mix up but when you turn to an only-English speaking person and that's just fake you want to belong to a culture you're actually not part of, first. Second I haven't seen a German person who can speak English and speaks English all the time
>
> YASSIN: French people are so proud of their identity, you know like French people as soon as they leave the airport and are in another country they start speaking a foreign language, let's say English. As soon as they are home they start speaking French in the plane; they are very proud of their language and that should be the case (Focus group)

Yet, it was tolerated when caused by low proficiency or when motivated by pragmatic reasons. In which case, it was not perceived as a sign of lack of pride in one's national or cultural identity:

> Yeah, maybe, maybe because I mean people who speak English it's because it's a universal language, I mean when you want somebody to

be successful, you have to ask: do you, do you know English? I mean English is a universal language so I think when parents teach their children about English, it's for their benefit, but it's not it's not the lack of Arabic; it is they want them to pursue English. (Mahmoud/Interview)

***

SANAA: OK, umm, does that make them less Egyptian?

MAHMOUD: No, not at all. No not at all no. No I don't think so, not in my opinion, no I don't think so. I think it makes them educated, yeah it makes them educated. (Mahmoud/Interview)

Another negotiation strategy used by the students to resolve their national identity crisis is resorting to alternative resources. Yassin, a Canadian-Egyptian, sometimes resorted to Canadian English and highlighted his Canadian identity to verify his national identity:

> Arabic, uh whenever someone hears me speaking in Arabic, they always say that my Arabic is shaky and it's really annoying (laughter) because (laughter) they always, they always make fun out of it (laughter), but uh I mean English is the international language and everyone, most of the countries I have been to people speak English and my English I mean is Canadian so I mean it's understandable, umm uuh it's not too American because American is "awesome and stuff" and it's not too British because British like "oh" yeah and all that stuff (laughter). We're in the middle, we're in the middle. So, I loved the English level that Canadians have. (Yassin/Interview)

It is as if Yassin says to himself, if I cannot be a 100% Egyptian because of my less-than-perfect ECA, then I can surely be a Canadian and resort to my flawless Canadian accent. Other times he resorts to Egyptian politics to assert his Egyptian-ness:

> The Canadian one is very easy; people accept it quite easily from you. um when I speak in English or when I speak about Canada, it's very obvious that I know quite well about my Canadian identity, but due to the fact that I haven't been living in Egypt so much, I find it difficult to get that

> message across and what with my outstanding Arabic skills um it doesn't help much. The Egyptian part, I can, I can try I try at the end of the day it's still quite difficult. People don't accept the fact that I'm Egyptian because of my accent they have this doubt in their mind. It's, it's gonna be there. I can understand them. My language it's very obvious apparently to them that I'm not, I'm not that fully 100% Egyptian or 60% in this case, so, so yeah. (Yassin/Interview)

He associated ECA with Egyptian people, and associated politics with Egypt. In this way being less than perfect in ECA does not cost him much; it does not necessarily make him less of an Egyptian. Moreover, he has politics to connect to the country:

> YASSIN: Yeah, yeah, it's [The enhancement of his Egyptian identity] more about, it's more about being involved in the country than uh..I'm not involved with the people. With people, I associate it with language, but with the country as a whole, it's more politics
>
> […]
>
> SANAA: What have you been, uh how have you been negotiating your national identity since it's a combination of Canadian and Egyptian? What did you do to, how did you negotiate them within the context of AUC?
>
> YASSIN: um the Canadian one uh it wasn't negotiable; it was quite obvious from the beginning. I didn't have to negotiate anything. it was they see me I don't look that much Egyptian and I I have a Canadian accent, so uh the Canadian one was just a given; it was just a it was there, I didn't have to do anything about it. The Egyptian one I had to, talking about politics, in uh with people uh it helps a lot, it stimulates this Egyptian personality over at the end of the day no matter where I am from I'm still Egyptian, I still care about this country. Uh so politics has been, talking about politics has been slightly negotiable about my Egyptian identity and uh criticizing people about their smelly Arabic. (Yassin/Interview)

When I asked Yassin during the last interview if not speaking fluent ECA made him less of an Egyptian, he replied as follows:

> No, no, not at all. I mean my Arabic isn't that bad. I mean I can speak Arabic and I can communicate with everyone I want to, but even though I do have an accent and stuff, but the fact that I can communicate and people understand me and I understand them in itself is enough to not make me feel bad about speaking, but it's quite annoying when someone picks it out on you, you know when they tell "oh look at that word and it's [unintelligible] you don't know how to pronounce ". You say come on dude; you know, it's that kind of thing. (Yassin/Interview)

During the numerous times I talked to Yassin throughout his first year at AUC, both during the interviews and outside of them, Yassin's ECA has been more or less the same. Thus, I doubt that his change of mind has been caused by an improvement in his ECA fluency. Rather, it was probably caused by a process of negotiation whereby he redefined who an Egyptian is and gave less weight to ECA fluency in favour of functionality. As long as he functioned well in ECA and was able to communicate his message to his Egyptian interlocutors, then his ECA "isn't that bad" and thus he is an Egyptian like everybody else.

On the other hand, the students who underwent an identity crisis due to their disappointment with AUC as an atypical Egyptian community appeared to have simply overcome that initial shock and begun to see beyond their initial impressionistic judgment as they started distinguishing the nuances within the AUC community.

Finally, Aya, the only student whose national identity was challenged in class by her "misinformed" Egyptology professor, decided not to correct or discuss with her teacher until she becomes more knowledgeable:

> So *ya'any* OK (laughter). I love to discuss [unintelligible] when I'm experienced; I wasn't experienced but I know this information from my school, so *ya'any* I really don't trust my, my Egyptian curriculum [high-

> school curriculum]and uh uh OK. It's totally Ok, it's not a big deal *ya'any*; whether he [Ekhnaton]married his sister *walla* [or] not, married *we khalas* [and that's it] (laughter). (Aya/Interview)

Aya was now less defensive and less sensitive about a non-Egyptian claiming to know about Egyptian history better than she did. She even doubted the accuracy of her source of information, her high school curriculum.

**5.4.4 National identity enhancement.** Whether they were aware of the subtle impact that AUC was having on their national identity construction or not, the interviewees' narratives indicate that AUC created several opportunities in which they reflected on their national identity. A lot of those opportunities were related to the Revolution:

> The thing is now in our RHET 201 [Research Writing] class we're talking about how the women, how the revolution is gonna affect women for the future, like the future of women. So at first I used to just like before, before I came here or before we used to discuss these in class it would just be like the superficial what I did hear on the streets basically, or the opinions from my friends, or all the revolution has done in this and this, or nothing's gonna change, that kind of thing. But now I've really, we've, we've researched it extensively and I've looked at like studies and like scholarly articles and that kind of thing, so I can, I have a deeper sort of knowledge about the issue of the revolution in particular. Other issues in Egypt as well, education, that kind of thing.
>
> SANAA: Women issues?
>
> MARINA: Women and as well like everything; poverty, education, illiteracy, …
>
> SANAA: Because of the 201 course.
>
> MARINA: And other courses; 201 has to do with women; other courses like the scientific thinking uh the seminars we do research around the books that could be [unintelligible].

SANAA: Could you name some of the seminars? The Scientific Method seminar? Or do you mean the core, the seminars?

MARINA: No there is the seminar that I'm doing we read novels, we've read two books so far Gilgamesh, the epic of Gilgamesh and Antigone by Sophocles, so even though they don't have much to do…

SANAA: Apparently.

MARINA: Yeah but still we go into like themes like for example…[…]

SANAA: That are applicable to Egypt.

MARINA: Yeah for example in Antigone we were doing like about tyranny of the king. So just we, I do more research about I read a lot of articles about it so I know more about the issue now. I can join in arguments now but I'm not just listening. (Marina/Interview)

Unlike Yassin who did not think that AUC "*had that much to influence [him] and [his] Egyptian nationality,"* Marina believed that because of - *not in spite of*- the type of education offered at AUC, she had the opportunity to think deeply about issues related to Egypt. Had she been at a state university where an Engineering student like herself only studies Engineering subjects, she might not have had this chance:

That's why I'm, I'm, I like the liberal arts and all sorts of choices now because I feel like they wouldn't have gotten this experience if it's just been sciences and physics and just something to do with architecture because most of the experience I'm getting now is outside of the architecture courses. (Marina/Interview)

Even her Engineering classes sometimes nurtured her Egyptian-ness. One of her Engineering professors, whom she described as "very patriotic […] very respectful […] old man" had a great effect on her. This professor talked about "engineering and Egypt" and changed her view of Egyptian men:

He gives me a very positive view about the males in Egypt which I previously, I have to say that, I don't know, males in Egypt have sort of

had a bad negative sort of stigma attached like they're always you know they have a bad temper. (Marina/Interview)

Even Elham who comes from a typical Egyptian family and a moderate socio-economic class reported getting introduced to “Egyptian stuff” at AUC, a facet of Egyptian culture that she had never explored before:

> I don't know but I think it's more related to my friends because some of my friends now they have like, I don't know if that's related or not but they like listening to like old music, so old music I never tried to listen to before, *fa* [so] I was introduced to something new in my life; I never thought I would like listen to that kind of music, folklore and all of these things, so I like that. I was introduced to some Egyptian, old Egyptian writers; I can't remember any names actually, but yeah my friends used like to talk about this and they talk about like the ancient stuff, so I knew things about Egypt that I didn't know before. That was, that was really interesting. (Elham/Interview)

***

Mahmoud, who holds both the American and Egyptian citizenships, explained that AUC *“enhanced”* both his American and Egyptian identities; interestingly he only referred to his English and Arabic linguistic abilities when explaining his national identities’ enhancement:

> SANAA: How about the AUC? Did it influence them [Egyptian & American identities] in any way?
>
> MAHMOUD: Did it influence them in any way?..Could I say it enhanced?
>
> SANAA: How did it do that?
>
> MAHMOUD: uh again every time, when I look at other people in the rhetoric class, they would uh, or in other classes, they have trouble understanding, and trouble writing, and trouble expressing what they want to say, and I do it with ease, I do appreciate what I know, what I have.
>
> […]

MAHMOUD: I'm proud to be American in that sense.

SANAA: In the sense of being a fluent speaker?

MAHMOUD: In that sense, yes.

[…]

MAHMOUD: And vice versa. When I see people, who struggle with Arabic, I say "oh *hamdollah* [thank God] I'm Egyptian" because Arabic in Egypt is kind of the moderate Arabic, Because in *suriya* [Syria]and *lebnan* [Lebanon] if you'd hear someone "What are you saying?" especially in *so'odiyya* [Saudi Arabia]. It's horrible. (Mahmoud/Interview)

During the focus group, however, students disagreed about whether AUC provided opportunities for them to nurture their national identity or not. On the one hand, Alia believed that national identity is rather static and not easily influenced:

> by the time you reach university you're either proud or not proud of your country; it's not something that you develop at an older age; it kind of grows with you over time (Alia/Focus group)

Moreover, they, unanimously agreed that one's background plays a huge role in how one constructs and negotiates one's national identity at AUC. However, when it came to their current environment and peer pressure, Alia downplayed its effect in favour of personal agency:

> Peer pressure is not only at AUC, it's all around […] If you are a real Egyptian, then you will be a real Egyptian at AUC; if you're not comfortable with being a real Egyptian, you won't be a real Egyptian at AUC and anywhere else. If you're comfortable enough with who you are, then you'd be yourself wherever you are. (Alia/Focus group)

This was perhaps due to not experiencing a change in the environment she was used to at the German school:

> For me I didn't feel like it was such an, I didn't feel that I moved from one community to another community after leaving my school. I was in the

German school, so basically it's the same thing; this is Germanized, this is Americanized. (Alia/Focus group)

Yassin and Mahmoud disagreed with Alia on the grounds that *"there is peer pressure that can make you doubt your identity"* (Yassin/Focus group) and *"very few people are bold enough not to care about other people's opinions"* (Mahmoud/Focus group). Aya, as well, argued that students from completely different environments such as LEAD students who came from distant governorates got a cultural shock at AUC and some of them underwent severe identity changes.

Focus group participants, except Aya, agreed that AUC does provide many opportunities that nurture one's Egyptian identity. However, they all highlighted individual agency as an important factor in national identity construction, mainly one's choices of AUC peers, curricular and extra-curricular activities:

YASSIN: It depends on the people you are interacting with
Mahmoud: It does. It depends on the courses you are taking as well. There are some courses that do develop your national identity as an Egyptian
[…]
ELHAM: And also if you're dealing with international students; in that case some of them may ask you about your culture and then by answering these things you'll understand your national identity. (Focus group)

**5.4.5 National identity and religion.** Religion, be it Christianity or Islam, is an important component of Egyptian national identity. When asked what does being an Egyptian mean to them, several students referred to religion:

Egypt is a religious. Whether it is Islamic, Christianity, it is religious. Always has been, always will be. I mean Christianity, like I believe that

> Egypt is all its life, all its history from the existence always been a religious country. (Khaled/Interview)
>
> ***
>
> I feel proud being an Egyptian. And because of the Revolution, it's the belonging. It's true Egypt has got problems, unemployment and stuff, but pride fills me big deal. In the Quran, God says (Come into Egypt safe, God willing), Egypt had been mentioned many times in the Quran and I'm so proud of that. When someone asks me about the future of Egypt, I say God protects Egypt. I'm sure Egypt will be better in the future [Translation mine]. (Aya/Interview)
>
> ***
>
> MAHMOUD: Like one of the reasons I am proud to be Egyptian is again I'm sorry for bringing this up again, in the Quran it said *masr* [Egypt], it mentioned *masr*.
>
> SANAA: *udkhulu misra inshaallahu aminin* [Enter Egypt, Allah willing, safe [and secure][4]]
>
> MAHMOUD: You know it's it's "hello! I'm part of something in the Quran", so it's, it's, that's why I am proud of it, not because of politics and all that stuff, that's why. (Mahmoud/Interview)

For some of the students, religion is in fact the reason behind what they see as an important Egyptian national character trait, the trait of caring about each other:

> Here [as opposed to Kuwait] people walk on the street; people talk to strangers much more openly, much more freely. I know right now [following the Revolution] it's dangerous but it's still easy, like you stop and ask for directions. There's human contact basically so this is Egypt for me, and people are down to earth, they're religious. […] They value family and religion very, very much. (Marina/Interview)
>
> ***

[4] Quran XII: 99

SANAA: Which aspects are you proud of in being an Egyptian?

MAHMOUD: uuh the heritage, the history, uum the people, like to be part of a community that's nice genuinely and they care for you genuinely maybe because of Islam or because of the religion, because elsewhere they won't care about you; they wouldn't ask about you if you're in America or in other countries but here there's that thing, there's connection between people. So, [unintelligible] attribute. (Mahmoud/Interview)

When it comes to religion, the Egyptian nationality takes first position over the Canadian and American nationalities that Yassin and Mahmoud hold respectively:

YASSIN: When it comes to religion I can't depend on Canada as a source of religion. I can depend on it as a source of comfort, safety, warmth, uh mother land, all that. And true as it was when I was over there, I, I used to go to Sunday school and I used, my dad was head of the mosque and everything, but uh at the same time it's not an Islamic country. It's not a country abiding by the sharia, and as such when we were talking about politics and how politics, how sharia should enter the politics and all that, I was referring now as the countries that abide by sharia and countries that don't abide, which includes Canada.

[…]

YASSIN: Religion, religion shouldn't be uh, religion shouldn't be related to your nationality whatsoever; it's a religion at the end of the day; it's, it's, you're either, you pick your religion; religion it's Islam, Christianity, any religion. That, that, then under nationality you have Canadian, Egyptian, and such, so under each category I have several choices. So I don't think they should intersect.

SANAA: OK, um so let me rephrase it just to make sure I got it right. Like when you organize, when you order not organize your identities, they all make you who you are but like the religious one comes first.

YASSIN: Religious comes first, then Canadian (Yassin/Interview)

***

SANAA: Are there things you're not very proud of, being an American?

MAHMOUD: uuum religion, religion-wise.

SANAA: How so?

MAHMOUD: I'm a firm believer in Islam and I love my religion and I respect that and I try to learn more about my religion, but uh the American society doesn't have it so I don't, I don't like that. (Mahmoud/Interview)

On another occasion, Mahmoud expressed his discontent with the difficulty he faced in finding a mosque to pray in while visiting New York during the Fall break. However, unlike Mahmoud and Yassin, whose religious identity enhanced their Egyptian identity, for Heba it is particularly the way Islam is practiced in Egypt that makes her less proud as an Egyptian; she narrated a very different experience upon her visit to the United States. She said that the first time ever she went to a mosque for Eid prayer was in the US she felt freer than in Egypt; from the criticism she is likely to encounter in an Egyptian mosque, for example, being criticized for praying in skinny jeans. She expressed disapproval of the fact that Egyptians, both Muslims and Christians, "don't look at the good stuff in religion" and that "there's the Egyptian mind within everything":

> I'll tell you an example um the first time I've ever prayed Eid I've lived here all my life the first time I've ever prayed Eid was in America in the United States, New Jersey, because there I felt motivated. I felt I could go and I could put on a veil and walk on the street and I could even though I wasn't like, no one like not a lot of Muslims there bas I felt like people would accept me for who I was and no one is going to look at me and judge me or I mean I'm sure they'd judge me obviously but they won't act upon that judgment they're going to, no one's going to say, no one would look at you and say oh you're wearing skinny jeans and then you're gonna pray, or oh you're going to do, they don't have this kind of judgment, so I feel like um the way like even religion in Egypt, it isn't

> Islamic or Christianity or whatever, it's how there's so much more than that there is like looking at it from a different view. There's the Egyptian mind within everything so to wrap it all up in a nut shell…
>
> SANAA: It's cultural.
>
> HEBA: Cultural, yes it's cultural more than just religion or there's something which alters like Egyptian I don't know, so umm to wrap it all up, am I proud to be Egyptian? I think at this point right now, I don't have enough experiences even if I lived here most of, all my life I feel like I need to really be more exposed to different kinds of Egyptian, to really understand and be able to like formulate what being an Egyptian really is in order for me to say oh I'm proud to be such or I'm not proud to be such. (Heba/Interview)

Unlike Mahmoud, Yassin, and Aya whose national pride is mainly dependent on religion, for Heba, the way religion is practiced in Egypt is a main reason for questioning whether being Egyptian should be a source of pride.

## 5.5 Language Identity

In this section I analyse the stages of language identity construction and negotiation that the freshman Egyptian students went through at the AUC. I first shed light on their linguistic practices and proficiency in SA, ECA and English, and then I analyse the unique ways in which they constructed and negotiated this identity.

**5.5.1. Standard Arabic proficiency.** The educational background of the students played a pivotal role in their proficiency and attitudes toward SA, putting graduates of international/foreign schools at a disadvantage compared to their peers from national governmental Egyptian schools. Except for Aya and Elham who graduated from governmental schools where all subjects but foreign languages are taught in SA, all participants who graduated from international/foreign schools reported unsatisfactory proficiency in reading and/or writing SA. Their self-reported proficiency ranged from absolute mediocrity to average competency. Alia is the only graduate of a foreign school who possessed high proficiency due to the advanced Arabic classes she took at the German School. In fact, she graduated from her school with honours in Arabic:

> ALIA: Well, we study the ministry books but um in twelve grade we stop doing that because that didn't meet the criteria of the German Abitur if you wanted to do Arabic and the German Abitur we had to do it their way, so in the 12th grade we read novels by Naguib Mahfouz, by Abbas El-Akkad.
>
> SANAA: They're quite complex and advanced.
>
> ALIA: Yeah. Also, Tawfik Al-Hakim, we read, we rod, we read their books and we analysed them. We've been analysing ever since I could remember. The ninth, eight grade we've been analysing short stories,

> novels, whole novels, um fiction, non-fiction, texts, articles, speeches, in Arabic… (Alia/Interview)

All students, regardless of their educational backgrounds and proficiency, expressed concern about "losing" their SA, namely their ability to read and write. For some students that deterioration had already begun long before they joined AUC. For others, it started in high school when SA classes were either discontinued or marginalized because of the pressure to focus on subjects that they believed would secure them a high GPA. In fact, most of the interviewees had not read or written SA for "a very long time":

> I haven't written a couple of words in Arabic; I haven't written a sentence in Arabic for a very long time. But uh, but reading I can understand ya'any I have no problem. (Alia/ Interview)

The marginalized status of Arabic in the foreign schools' curricula, the arid Arabic curriculum and the uninteresting methods in which it is taught de-motivated the students:

> Arabic isn't in the GPA [in high school] *fa yaa'ny* [so I mean] they kind of like say *yaa'ny* you either try to pass, […] I usually work better with something I'm convinced in doing it […] like every year I'm faced with the same problem which is the Egyptian curriculum. Every year I look at it and I criticize it and I tell this isn't some, I'm not learning, this isn't something I'm being, this is not something, nothing *yaa'ny* I feel like *yaa'ny* there's no there's no reason for me to even read this because I find it like illogical and it doesn't make sense to me. I feel like if they want to teach you something they should do it in [an interesting] way […] It's all memorizing and there's no understanding; you don't know why you're doing it; you know what you're doing, but you don't know why you're doing it. (Heba/ Interview)

Heba does not see any added value in studying SA given the uninteresting curriculum and teaching methods based on memorisation.

Participants who were educated in KSA, where the teaching of Arabic is allegedly not as marginalized in foreign schools as is the case in Egypt, did not do any better; Mona, for example, was not capable of writing an essay in SA without grammatical mistakes. When asked about her extra-curricular reading habits, she explained that she only read in English:

> MONA: I've never read in Arabic a book before like a story or anything. Like all the Arabic reading I get is from reading in the Arabic class at school. It's not like I would take an Arabic book and read it.
>
> SANAA: Why not?
>
> MONA: My parents always do tell me to read because we have a lot of books. My siblings went to an Arabic school, the older ones. So, we do have a lot of Arabic books, Arabic stories and they're always like "you should start reading them; they're really interesting," but it's not as easy to read in Arabic as it is in English, so yeah. (Mona/ Interview)

Yassin, who only started learning SA at the age of 11 and who stopped learning it after grade 9, described a lamentable situation back in his high school in KSA:

> I was, ok um, we were all sucky, I was the least sucky. That's how I will place myself. um, I did really uh we had an IG [IGCSE] exam, uh an IG I used to be in IG, and we, we, we were all very, very terrible at analysing, so the professor, he'd be just like zero, zero, zero, 0.5, you did well 0.25. It was really depressing, and then um towards the end we all took the exam, and I think they had to make like a whole new curve system for us, for our class alone. So basically, I got the highest and then we just, I mean it's, it's based on system A star, A, B, C, D, E and so on and so forth. So, we just all got As and A stars, which was, didn't make any sense whatsoever, so there had to be something wrong with either the examiner or the British Council or England at that time. […] for Arabic I only took it because of that particular time, uh after that I didn't take Arabic again. (Yassin/ Interview)

Most interviewees did not read in SA unless required by school to do so. Even when their parents urged and encouraged them to read in SA, they were still

not motivated; Mona did not respond to extrinsic motivation (her parents' encouragement). The only motivation that worked was intrinsic; Yassin, for instance, started reading in SA for intrinsic reasons related to his religious identity.

**5.5.2 Egyptian colloquial Arabic proficiency.** The interviewed students, all native speakers of ECA, do speak it fluently. Nonetheless, some of them were frequently asked about their origins because of their use of non-Egyptian Arabic words and/or their unfamiliarity with some common Egyptian expressions.

Contrary to the widely-held stereotypes about AUC students' linguistic practices, none of the interviewed students used English alone at home; all of them either used a combination of English and ECA or else exclusively used ECA if their siblings and/or parents did not speak English or were not sufficiently fluent in it, as illustrated by the following excerpts from seven different interviews:

> Arabic, definitely Arabic, yeah (laughter). (Khaled/Interview)
>
> ***
>
> Egyptian, yes. […] and with my sisters English as well or like half-half. [Translation mine] (Marina/Interview)
>
> ***
>
> NARDINE: I speak Arabic at home. Even with my friends we speak Arabic. My brother and sister tell me we should sometimes speak English at home, we do it for two or three days, then back to Arabic.
>
> SANAA: Why do you want to do that?
>
> NARDINE: They've graduated, got jobs; they don't speak English at work. They want us to communicate in English; they miss it. (Nardine/Interview)

***

My mom was living in the UK, in London for about six years where her PhD is. She didn't live there but she was like coming and going, so I love London. It's my second home as I always say.[…] because *yaa'ny* she went there for like three months, so she couldn't leave school, but we went there in the summers, and when she came back she was so influenced by it so she influenced us. We were influenced by her and then English as well because she was used to speak English there all the time, so when she came back she spoke English with us, and English then became like a main part of our speaking at home [...] But then actually when she came back that part stopped for a bit (laughter) but *yaa'ny* it didn't stop, we always use a mixed language between Arabic and English. (Alia/Interview)

***

Usually like a mix between English and Arabic. (Heba/Interview)

***

SANAA: In Saudi Arabia, you said you spoke Lebanese with your friends, English at home?

MONA: With my siblings but with my parents, we'd speak Arabic.

SANAA: Why? Do they insist you speak Arabic?

MONA: My mom understands but she can't really speak fluently.

SANAA: English?

MONA: English, yeah. My dad can speak and understand fine, but he just has an Egyptian accent, so (laughter). (Mona/Interview)

***

MOSTAFA: No, sometimes English.

SANAA: Sometimes English with your siblings?

MOSTAFA: With my mother and my sister, yeah.

SANAA: And your sister, but not with your father?

MOSTAFA: No, he's educated in the Arabic system.

SANAA: And your mother was educated in English?

MOSTAFA: In Arabic as well but she is, I mean, his, uh, her English is perfect. [translation mine] (Mostafa/Interview)

It is interesting, however, that the English used at home is one that the students have modified. Heba said that she and her brothers sometimes add the plural determinant "s" to ECA nouns; for instance, they say *shewak*-s [forks] instead of *shewak*. Likewise, Yassin and his sisters add "ing" to ECA verbs:

> With my sisters, oh with my sisters no Arabic […] it's in the middle. It's, it's this English-Arabic really cool mix. It's like I'm *enzel*-ing [going out]; you take an Arabic word, add "ing" or "ed" and then it's really nice and the language is beautiful, so my sisters it's an English-Arabic mix. (Yassin/Interview)

**5.5.3 English proficiency.** All interviewees, regardless of their degree of English proficiency, reported using English frequently after joining AUC. This is due to the linguistic environment at the university that immerses students in English as the medium of instruction and the high number of non-Egyptian faculty- 31% American and 16% from different other countries- compared to other English-medium universities in Egypt, as illustrated in figure 6. English at AUC is also the language of most public lectures and written communication.

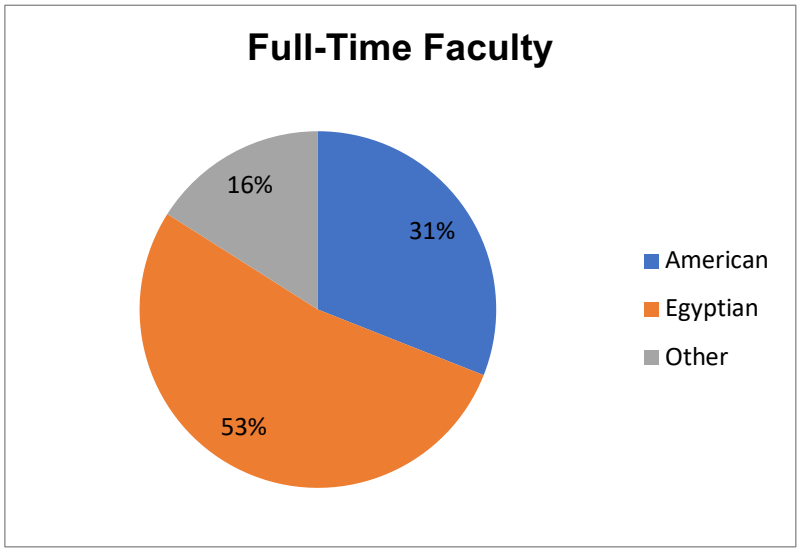


*Figure 6: Full-time AUC faculty by nationality (2011-2012) (AUCk, 2012)*

Besides being the medium of instruction and most public events at the AUC, English as a global language is ubiquitous in the participants' daily activities; it is the number one language when it comes to using the Internet and mass media. All the interviewees showed a preference for English movies, series and songs regardless of their English proficiency:

> If I'm watching movies, I'm watching them in English. If I'm listening to music I listen to it in English. I think it has for me the effect a global language would have on any person. (Alia/Interview)
>
> ***
>
> SANAA: What kind of music? English or Arabic?
>
> MOSTAFA: English. I don't like Arabic. I used to listen to Amr Diab.
>
> SANAA: And now?
>
> MOSTAFA: English songs only. (Mostafa/Interview)

The main reason for their preference for English movies, namely American, is their superior quality when compared to Arabic ones. Following are excerpts from interviews in which two students explained their preference for American movies and series:

> […] Usually I don't like Arabic television, by the way I just like English television because Arabic is way behind, way behind (laughter). In the writing, in the script, whatever that is, yeah I like movies, I like TV a lot. […] uh, usually it's like crime investigations like NCIS, CSI, uh usually science fiction like Vampire Diaries; comedy shows like Two and a Half Men, and How I met Your Mother. Some of these shows, you know. (Khaled/Interview)

***

> AYA: uh in the past, movies, English movies and I *ya'any* I didn't like to watch Arabic movies cause *ya'any* I know what will happen at the end ya'any (laughter).
>
> SANAA: You can predict the end (laughter).
>
> AYA: Yes, you know, as we say in Arabic film *a'araby* [An Arabic movie; an expression used to indicate a silly story that doesn't make sense] (laughter) or film *hindy* [An Indian movie; also used to indicate a silly story that doesn't make sense] (laughter). (Aya/Interview)

This preference for American movies was reported by other studies. Participants in Gao et al. (2015) longitudinal study which investigated the EFL learning and self-identity development of Chinese university students also reported a clear preference for American movies:

> Without attractive plots, skilled actors and fabulous visual effects, Chinese TV programs are never a match to American ones" (UC, I5); Ren Xiaodong stated, "After you gradually get used to American movies, your entire perspective of appreciation and your views will be changed. ... And then you'll be reluctant to watch Chinese movies. I hardly watch Chinese movies now. (p. 150)

This preference for American media among young people is not only restricted to Middle-Eastern societies such as Egypt or Asian societies like China; it is also applicable to European countries like "Germany and Spain, where cultural artefacts are predominantly L1-mediated" and in Nordic countries such as

Sweden where “English may be implicated in young people’s identity work to a greater extent […and] many of their most important cultural experiences may be English-mediated” (Henry & Goddard, 2015, p. 258). Likewise, English media seem to have become the default choice for the interviewees in my study, so much so that Arabic movies and songs have become almost alien to them.

> I don’t like Arabic films in general. If I have to choose between an English film and an Arabic one, I’ll choose the English one [translation mine]. (Mostafa/Interview)
>
> ***
>
> [I watch] How I met your Mother, Desperate Housewives, Vampire Diaries, stuff like that. But I don't really like watching Arabic stuff. Like once I was at the movies and there was no English stuff, so we watched the, we watched an Arabic movie with my friends, and I was really annoyed with them. I don't, like I don't find that sense of humour funny. (Mona/Interview)

Henry & Goddard (2015) explained that “[h]aving grown up surrounded by English-language media, not only is switching between different media forms (domestic and international) and languages (Swedish and English) unproblematic, but, at times, the choice of local varieties can even seem strange” (p. 262).

**5.5.4 Construction and negotiation.** Linguistic identity construction and negotiation took several paths for different students depending on whether that identity was a higher-level one for them or not. As explained in the literature review chapter, the identities at a higher level on the control system are general ones whose standards are related to ideals, beliefs, and values; whereas the lower level identities have goals that are more concrete and situated (Burke & Stets, 2009). When their linguistic identity ranked high on the identity control system, students displayed high emotional attachment to the language in

question, which in turn seemed to determine how they constructed and negotiated that identity.

In the following three sub-sections, (5.5.4.1, 5.5.4.2 & 5.5.4.3), I report how the participants constructed and negotiated their SA, ECA, and English language identities respectively. But first, I present a list of the themes and sub-themes related to language identity in table 9.

*Table 9*

*List of Themes and Sub-themes Related to Language Identity*

| **Themes** | **Sub-themes** |
|---|---|
| Hierarchy of language identity determines construction & negotiation | • SA identity higher on identities hierarchy for students educated in SA<br>• SA important for students with a prominent religious identity<br>• SA importance related to religious affiliation<br>• SA hierarchy determines emotional or practical view of SA |
| Identity crisis | • Distress/ / inability to verify language identity<br>  ○ Fear that SA &ECA are replaced by English<br>  ○ Egyptian-ness questioned because of language<br>  ○ Nostalgia<br>• Low SA proficiency not in accord with being a good Muslim<br>• Feeling incompetent and frustrated (low English proficiency) |
| Identity Negotiation/Agency | • SA identity negotiation<br>  ○ Rationalized low SA proficiency<br>  ○ Delaying taking courses/ Not a priority<br>  ○ Improving/maintaining SA proficiency<br>  ▪ Effort in maintaining proficiency proportionate to degree of prominence of religious identity<br>  ▪ SA Classes<br>  ▪ Reading religious books<br>  ▪ Students' activities<br>• ECA negotiation/ Adapting linguistic practices<br>  ○ Using more ECA than before<br>  ○ Using English to hide low ECA proficiency<br>  ○ Concealing English proficiency<br>• English negotiation<br>  ○ Immersing oneself in English<br>  ○ Translating into SA |
| Identity resolution/enhancement | • Neutralized language identity conflicts<br>  ○ Acquired more ECA vocabulary<br>  ○ More Egyptian accent<br>  ○ Confidence speaking in English |

#### *5.5.4.1 Standard Arabic*

***Standard Arabic identity crisis.*** For students with a prominent religious identity (Mahmoud, Aya, Yassin), SA was very important in constructing that identity. Aya spoke about SA in a very emotional tone and connected it to religion; she considered herself lucky to have been born in an Arabic-speaking country:

> If I didn't know Arabic, I'd take long years to learn it, so I can read the Quran. When I joined the AUC, I met Turkish students; they were trying hard to understand the Quran, same for the American students. And although I speak Arabic, there are some words in the Quran I can't understand. So if I wasn't an Arab, I'd be very upset for not being able to understand the Quran. I'm lucky I'm an Arab [Translation mine]. (Aya/Interview)

After joining AUC, even that limited contact with SA that the students had in foreign high schools came to a halt. The only link- no matter how weak it might have been - they maintained with SA (for Muslim students) was religion, albeit a link only with reading SA not with writing it. This applied to all Muslim students regardless of their degree of religiousness:

> Unfortunately, my reading is mostly English unless I'm reading like the Quran or something I'll read it with my mom or I'll play like the tape and I'll try to read along bas[but] my Arabic skills aren't very developed. (Heba/Interview)

***

> I know Arabic is important, but I can't speak it, but it's not like it annoys me; I can speak it but I can't like read it properly and write it properly but that doesn't really affect me, but it's important ok that's more religious but my parents always say like "*a'arabi loghat elquran*" [Arabic is the language of the Quran] and stuff like that, so yeah. (Mona/Interview)

For Mostafa as well, Quran was the main reason for his above-average SA proficiency:

> I used to learn Quran, so I think that at that time I was better in Standard Arabic. This is a period, the best period in which I knew how to speak Standard Arabic and to understand Standard Arabic and so on. [Translation mine] (Mostafa/Interview)

On the other hand, the two Christian students who participated in this study read the Bible in English not in SA. Nardine, like other students, almost never read anything in SA. When I asked her in which language she usually read, her reply was "*English for sure"*. To her it seemed logical to do so:

> NARDINE: I even read the Bible in English; I don't understand the Arabic edition. And I don't read the Egyptian newspapers.
>
> SANAA: Your family too?
>
> NARDINE: No. They all read Arabic.
>
> SANAA: Is it because you didn't learn Arabic well in school?
>
> NARDINE: I don't like Arabic in the first place. I hate it. [Translation Mine] (Nardine/Interview)

Marina, however, read religious books in Arabic but read the Bible in English. She explained that she used to read the Bible in Arabic when she had to do so in the Sunday school *"up to the age of ten or twelve"*, but once she was old enough not to attend it, she started reading the Bible in English because the Arabic version was too complicated for her:

> MARINA: Umm, like Arabic *al-fush'a* [SA], I find it really complicated and it has a lot of words that I don't understand. I know how to read and write but I keep ref-… like even if I tried reading in Arabic if it's not simplified, like the Bible for example which isn't simple I'd have to keep referring to words like what does that mean? What does that mean?
>
> […]
>
> MARINA: They're all translations anyway.

SANAA: You know for example for most Muslims you know there is that link between Arabic and religion.

MARINA: Yeah.

SANAA: I mean it's important because it's the language of Quran and things like that. I mean is there like I don't know, I mean educate me, is there a similar thing for Arab Christians?

MARINA: No, there definitely is not because it's actually in Hebrew. It's originally in Hebrew so all of these are just translations. Yeah and they it's not that they just convey the same message, they're the same word by word of the Hebrew, so it doesn't matter like if I read the Arabic or English, it's exactly the same. (Marina/Interview)

Although most students expressed fear of losing their competency in SA, and expressed the intention to maintain/ improve their proficiency, only those who manifested an emotional attachment to the language- either because it ranked high among other identities or was closely linked to another higher identity- took tangible measures towards improving their SA. The other students for whom SA identity did not rank high held a rather practical view towards this language; they viewed it as an asset that might be useful or else they completely avoided it on the grounds of its being a very difficult language. The only reason for Marina to "hold on" to SA was the possibility that she might be required to write in SA by her future employers:

> I wanna keep like I wanna hold on to my language, I don't wanna, it will be useful in the future like I have no problem with spoken Arabic [ECA] but I don't think that's gonna go away ever (laughter), but it would be useful to be able to write just in the future even as because my job might include writing reports in Arabic and English and any other languages, so. (Marina/Interview)

On the contrary, students who graduated from the Egyptian system were emotionally attached and highly committed to SA, a commitment that is absent

in most of those who graduated from foreign educational systems, except the highly religious.

> I started reading when I was so young and it was in Arabic. Recently I've read in English, but I'm more attached to reading in Arabic. (Aya/Interview)

When Aya and Elham, the only graduates of Egyptian governmental schools, joined AUC and were now heavily immersed in English, they felt nostalgic towards reading and writing SA, especially Aya whose exposure to English had been limited to the mediocre English she learned at her public school.

> It's amazingly rich, the words and expressions. And when I read for Al-Akkad or Naguib Mahfouz, I taste the language they've written. English is not as rich as Arabic. There's no other Language which is as rich as Arabic. Maybe Japanese and Chinese are rich, but not as Arabic, Arabic words carry different meanings, different effects. (Aya/Interview)

Aya's emotional attachment to SA was disclosed by her use of the sensory word "taste" when referring to her preference for the language that she saw as superior to other languages. Elham as well missed studying SA:

> I've been studying Arabic for like twelve years and I can't handle not studying Arabic for like for the rest of my life, that's first of all. Second of all, I love the Arabic language I think it's what... I want a chance to read, like since I came here I haven't read any poetry or any article like written in complicated Arabic so I wish I will be able to do that. (Elham/Interview)

Elham and Aya experienced a state of confusion as a result of their "mov[ing] across geographical and[/or] sociocultural borders [....]as the new and varied input provided to [them] serve[d] to disturb taken-for-granted points of reference"(Block, 2007, p. 20). Moving to AUC was a critical experience for them, whereby critical experience "mean[s] periods of time during which prolonged contact with L2 and a new and different cultural setting causes

irreversible destabilization of the individual's sense of self" (Block, 2007, p. 21). They underwent a state of identity distress because of their inability to verify their linguistic identity at the AUC. Their linguistic practices at AUC (not reading and writing SA as much as before) were not in line with the self-meanings they held in their linguistic identity standard, which caused them to feel nostalgic. Elham whose SA was outstanding reported feeling a bit strange writing in SA. She was undergoing a subtractive change whereby her "language and cultural identity were replaced by the target language and target cultural identity" (Yongwei, 2009, p. 158). Subtractive bilingualism was explained by Yongwei (2009) through the following example: "'With the improvement of my English proficiency, I feel my Chinese is becoming less idiomatic'; Split change – the struggle between the languages and cultures gives rise to identity conflict. An example: 'I feel weird when my speech in Chinese is subconsciously mixed with English words'" (p. 158). In the following excerpt, Elham also spoke of feeling "a bit strange" writing in SA because English had replaced SA as her writing language:

> SANAA: Are you still able to read very well in Arabic, to write in Arabic?
>
> ELHAM: uh, yes when I, I'm able to read in Arabic very well as usual, ya'any just like before. And writing in Arabic when I, in winter break I tried to write in Arabic, it was like OK, that's like, it was, it was a bit strange, but I can write in Arabic, it's ok.
>
> SANAA: Yeah. Like why was it strange?
>
> ELHAM: Because I spent like three months writing in English, everything even notes, my name, phone numbers, everything I used to write it in English but when I came like I wanna write notes in Arabic because I wanna take notes on the book I was reading in Arabic so I had to write it in Arabic, so it was a little bit strange but then it's ok. (Elham/Interview)

Likewise, Alia felt bothered by not using German which was the language she was educated in at school, the language closest to her heart as was SA to Aya and Elham. Alia reported a deterioration of her SA level but she was not emotionally attached to it. It was German that she was emotional and nostalgic about:

> ALIA: [German] means a lot definitely, and we, um, we had to learn German, I learned German for like 15 years of my life. It's like my mother tongue. We actually, the Abitur exam is where you're examined, where German is your mother tongue.
>
> SANAA: As a native uuh.
>
> ALIA: Yeah, as your mother tongue. So, German plays a huge role. I miss it very, very much and I miss being taught in it, so the first time I was in calculus class and then they started saying everything in German.
>
> SANAA: In English.
>
> ALIA: In English, so what is "absolute"? What is all that thing, all these things? So it was in physics as well, what is "velocity"? What is I don't know then..
>
> SANAA: You didn't know all the terms.
>
> ALIA: No, but I'm going through with it, up till now it's OK. And um I love, many many people hate the language [German]. They say it's very, very hard and everything but I don't think so. I think it's *yaa'ny* when you, I've been speaking German here for more than half my life, so I love it. I don't have any problems and actually when we speak, the Germans themselves don't believe how good we are, that we don't have an accent, we speak like them, and they're really impressed with our level of German. They don't believe that we're Egyptians speaking this level of German actually, and when we apply for example for German universities, we are equal to German students. There are no difference. We don't apply like international students, we apply as German students. So, that's one of the positive things about going study there because we are equal to them. And I was actually listening today because of the school sickness, I was, I opened, I wake, I woke up very early today

because of my illness, I couldn't sleep so I turned on the TV and started watching German TV. (Alia/Interview)

Alia was worried about her German proficiency in the same way that some other participants were worried about their SA proficiency. And just like them, she did not have enough time to go on with her initial plans to remain in touch with the language and to maintain her high proficiency:

ALIA: I'm scared for my level in German. I want, I don't want 15 years of my life or 16 years of my life to go *ya'any*.

SANAA: You're afraid to become less fluent in German or to forget some of the…

ALIA: To forget the grammar, to become less fluent, that I need to think of some of the words, some of the basic words I need to think of them to get them. I feel really bad when it happens.

SANAA: Are you doing anything about it?

ALIA: No, actually I don't have the time. I said that when I have free time I'll listen to, I'll read my German books from last year and stuff, and I'll study the grammar, but I don't have any free time (laughter). (Alia/Interview)

Mahmoud and Yassin who were less proficient in SA than Aya, Elham, and Alia felt a conflict between the meanings held in their identity standard about being a "good Muslim" which necessitates knowing good SA -to be able to read and understand Quran- and their self-in-situation meanings; that they were not as proficient/fluent in SA as they wished.

MAHMOUD: I can read and write good Arabic but not to an extent where newspaper Arabic or the fluent correct Arabic. But when it comes to some parts of the Quran I say the [sound] *qaf* rather weird
SANAA: *kaf*?
MAHMOUD: Maybe
SANAA: (laughing) like *kaf*?

MAHMOUD: yeah *kaf*
SANAA: But I mean most Egyptians do that.
MAHMOUD: Yeah, yeah, true, true. […]But it's a bit more prominent *a'andy* [for me] (Mahmoud/Interview)

***Standard Arabic identity resolution***. When the perceived meanings of self-in-situation match the self-meanings in the identity standard, the individual's identity is verified. However, if those meanings do not match, the individual feels distress and alters his/her behaviour to counteract the situational meanings in order to accomplish identity verification (Burke & Stets, 2009). So, the participants used different negotiation strategies to resolve their identity crises and accomplish identity verification.

Those whose SA identity ranked low did not exhibit any strong signs of a crisis to start with. They justified and rationalized not taking steps towards improving their proficiency in the language. The rationale was sometimes simply that it is a difficult language that they hate (Nardine). The difficulty they associate with SA and the lamentable methods in which they were taught the language at school as compared to the more creative and engaging methods in which they were taught other languages created a hateful relationship with SA. Nardine, for example, is neither willing nor planning to take SA courses:

I got no problem with talking [ECA], but I can't study Arabic or write Arabic [SA]. I hate that. [Translation mine] (Nardine/Interview)

Some students did not necessarily hate SA, yet they had a tense relationship with it. Although they had initially intended to take SA classes at AUC, they did not pursue that intention; they delayed taking SA courses even if some of them were required by AUC to do so (Marina/Heba/Mona). Despite being required to take SA classes at AUC, Marina said she would delay doing so till the very last semesters of her undergraduate studies:

MARINA: I haven't had any Arabic courses [at AUC] so I'm truly afraid that I've lost all of my skills in written Arabic. I don't know what I'm gonna do when I start doing Arabic again (laughter).

SANAA: Are you going to start doing it again?

MARINA: It's a requirement, so yes (laughter).

SANAA: When will you take that course?

MARINA: That's according to me. I will probably leave it till the last few years, like the last few semesters I mean.

SANAA: Till you have forgotten all the Arabic? Maybe that's not a wise choice.

MARINA: Yeah, I think maybe it's not.

SANAA: Maybe you should take it while Arabic is still fresh in your mind.

MARINA: Well.

SANAA: Think about it.

MARINA: Arguing in that way, it's not really that fresh because last time I did it was two years ago, so (laughter), but yeah I'm worried about that. My roommate who's Russian came here to study Arabic and like she's always asking me about translations of words and I'm surprised that there are a lot of words in the media that I don't understand or I can't remember like for example once she asked what's candidate in Arabic and I know the word I just can't get it right away. (Marina/Interview)

Likewise, Mona postponed taking SA courses that she was required to take because of her failing the high-school Arabic ministry exam:

SANAA: And when do you plan to take that course?

MONA: I don't know (laughter).

SANAA: You're postponing it?

MONA: I'm postponing it (laughter).

Heba, too, postponed the two courses she was required to take because she was busy with her other courses and her sick father did not see the urgency of doing so:

> HEBA: I don't know *ya'any*, I'm, I don't mind *ya'any*, I'll take it [the SA class], it's not like I have to take it now, you know? I wanna enjoy my summer and then I'll take it when I
>
> SANAA: so, it's just a requirement you want to be done with, right? You can't graduate, right? If you don't uh
>
> HEBA: no, it's not like *ya'any, ya'any* it's just summer is summer, you know? During the semester of working but after the last two weeks of finals and so much pressure and you just want to relax, you know?
>
> SANAA: hem, hem.
>
> HEBA: then I'm like *khalas [ok]*, I'll just take it during the time I'm supposed to take it and then
>
> SANAA: So, when do you plan to take it?
>
> HEBA: Sometime within the four years (laughing).
>
> SANAA: (laughing)
>
> HEBA: Sometime in the next three years; it's two courses *ya'any fa.* (Heba/Interview)

Because SA identity did not rank high for them, improving SA was not one of their priorities, unlike students for whom it ranked high who took immediate measures to improve/maintain a high level of SA proficiency. The latter exerted conscious efforts to maintain/improve their proficiency in SA. Aya, whose Arabic is excellent continued to read in SA throughout her first three semesters at AUC. She also joined students' clubs that provided her with the opportunity to practice SA such as the theatre club:

> AYA: And I was writing scenarios or scripts.
> SANAA: In Arabic or in English?

> AYA: uh in Arabic. Because all of the, all of the plays are in Arabic not English. And uh all of them [members of the students' theatre club] don't know how to write in Arabic and how to read Arabic, so I help them and they are Egyptians by the way (laughter). (Aya/Interview)

The degree of effort exerted by the students to improve/maintain proficiency in SA seems to be associated importantly with the degree of prominence and salience of their religious identity. Mahmoud and Yassin's determination to improve their proficiency in SA was triggered by religious motives:

> It [SA] got a lot better; it got a lot better; I can read a lot of *suras* [Quran verses] that I took in the classes [Quran and Arabic classes at the mosque] more efficiently and more accurately than I used to and I can read and understand more words and I can derive roots, I mean derive words from their actual roots. So, I'm really impressed with myself (laughter). *Alhamdollah* [Thank God]. (Mahmoud/Interview)

***

> But Quran, what's amazing about that is that the more you read it uh the more you understand it. And, and I, I've just become much more able to understand it just by reading it more. So *alhamdollah* [thank God] on that. (Yassin/Interview)

The link between SA and Islamic religion, well-established in the literature, has been confirmed by this study. Students with a prominent religious identity strived to improve their SA whereas those with a less prominent one did not, even when they initially planned to take SA courses at AUC. They had more important academic priorities and decided that taking Arabic classes was not one of them. On the contrary, there is no such link between SA and Christianity. Although the Coptic Bible is in SA and so are Coptic religious books, SA does not have "the same divine indexes that it has for Muslims" (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 111) who:

> consider the Koran to be holy scripture only in the original Arabic of its revelation. The Koran, while it may be translated, is only ritually valid in Arabic. This is connected with the notion of Arabic as a 'sacred Arabic'. Language itself is sacred, because of its miraculous power to communicate and to externalize thought. (Glassé, 1989, as cited in Bassiouney, 2014, p. 110)

Yassin read religious book and books about the history of Islam in SA to maintain his already above-average level of SA:

> YASSIN: Yeah. No the standard at AUC um there is all the courses are in English and stuff, so it's quite difficult to improve your Standard Arabic, but at home I got some books, so I read.
>
> SANAA: Did you get some books?
>
> YASSIN: Yeah, I always get books. uh I have books about the Abbasside time period and about Salah Eddin. (Yassin/Interview)

Mahmoud had also been trying to improve his SA reading ability by reading a book about Prophet Mohamed's life and other books about the history of Islam. He also attended SA and Quran classes in a mosque on weekends to improve his ability to read and understand Quran. Another reason for Mahmoud's efforts to enhance his SA proficiency is his change of major from Biology to Arabic and Islamic Studies, a major in which some of the readings are in SA:

> And afterwards we're gonna take Introduction to Arabic, Modern Arabic, Introduction to Classic Arabic [SA], and then there is uh lot of history courses like the *seerah* [Prophet Mohamed's life], there's a course called *Seerah and Hadith* [Prophet Mohamed's life and sayings], *seerah*, *hadith* and *tafseer* [Prophet Mohamed's life, sayings, and Quran explanation]. (Mahmoud/Interview)

Unlike Aya, Mahmoud, and Yassin, Elham did not put her plan to study SA at AUC into practice, although she felt nostalgic towards studying this language:

> SANAA: You decided you're not gonna take it this semester?

> ELHAM: No because I have other courses that are prerequisites for my major and when I did the advising they told me that's like a higher level, take the things that you should have first and then you'll have so many options to choose between them, and I got scared because I wanna minor in philosophy and I wanna take like, I have to take like a limited number of courses so I don't wanna waste courses uh."
> (Elham/Interview)

Perhaps this was due to her religious identity not being as highly ranked in her identities' hierarchy, or perhaps she deemed the cost of maintaining her high SA proficiency too high. Edwards (1985) "suggests that we should not expect people to make a huge cultural investment for full-scale maintenance of what he called a 'heritage language', if it is the case that a much smaller form of maintenance will serve that purpose" (as cited in Djité, 2006, p. 9). Elham had to fulfil her intended major declaration pre-requisites that she judged more worthy of attention and more in line with her education goals; thus, expecting her to invest time in maintaining her SA instead of declaration prerequisites would be unrealistic.

***Standard Arabic identity enhancement*.** The students who took steps towards improving or maintaining their SA proficiency –Aya, Mahmoud, and Yassin- have all reported an improvement in their SA because of taking SA courses, reading Quran and religious books in Arabic, or taking part in students' activities that entailed reading and writing in SA. Yassin, for example, who had not learned any SA until he was eleven, and who reported being *"the least sucky"* in SA among his classmates in Saudi Arabia, and performing poorly in IGCSEs Arabic exams in the following excerpt,

> […] we were all very very terrible at analysing, so the professor he'd be just like zero, zero, zero, 0.5, you did well 0.25. It was really depressing and then um towards the end we all took the exam and I think they had

to make like a whole new curve system for us, for our class alone. So basically, I got the highest and then we just, I mean it's, it's based on system A star, A, B, C, D, E and so on an so forth. So, we just all got As and A stars, which was, didn't make any sense whatsoever, so there had to be something wrong with either the examiner or the British Council or England at that time. It's probably [unintelligible],but, but no they're, but that was, that was I mean I wasn't for, for Arabic I only took it because of that particular time, uh after that I didn't take Arabic again.(Yassin/Interview)

was now commending himself on his SA level:

SANAA: So how do you evaluate yourself when it comes to Standard Arabic?

YASSIN: How I evaluate myself, um naturally I think I am slightly biased but I think I make, I mean I think that the fact that I can understand like um like uh there's the writer Manfalouty, I actually

SANAA: That's quite advanced.

YASSIN: Exactly, by grade 10 I could understand like approximately, if his article would be like 6 pages I could get like probably five pages out of that. So, so

SANAA: Good.

YASSIN: So, so to go from a Canadian no-know to that, I mean I just deserve a pat on my back. (Yassin/Interview)

Elham's SA, however, has been enhanced in a tweaked and unexpected way, one that did not involve making a huge investment since it was fully aligned with her major declaration prerequisites. In her attempt to understand academic materials in English, she translated them into SA and then back to English:

even when I'm reading [translations], they translated like literally, and it's hard for me to understand the Arabic words so I prefer to read it in English in order to understand the English and then understand the Arabic and I always have this Google translate which translates from *fus'ha* [SA] and Oxford Dictionary that translates in English so I first

understand the word in English and then translate it in Arabic to know the Arabic version. (Elham/Interview)

This complex translation process resulted in improving both her SA and her English:

ELHAM: […] the reason that made my Arabic improve more than like reading poetry and articles [in SA] it was English because I translate English words into Arabic and when I have I get the translations it's in *fus'ha* [SA].

[…]

SANAA: So you were reading books in English?

ELHAM: Yeah in English and then I translate, so that complicated words in English are translated in complicated words in Arabic.

SANAA: And it improved both your English and Arabic (laughter).

ELHAM: (laughter) Yeah.

SANAA: How long? How many years? Can you remember how many years have you been doing that?

ELHAM: Since 2008, I think. That's like three years, my high school life. (Elham/Interview)

#### *5.5.4.2 Egyptian colloquial Arabic*

***ECA crisis***. In the same way that SA caused an identity crisis for only those students to whom it mattered in the construction of their most highly-ranked identity (linguistic or religious) and who felt that those identities were under threat, ECA caused an identity crisis for 1) those whose "Egyptian-ness" was questioned because of poor ECA proficiency, or 2) those who felt that their ECA/Egyptian-ness is under threat by English. Some students were constantly reminded by their friends and/or family that their ECA was not as fluent as a typical Egyptian's. These were Yassin and Mona, born in Canada and KSA respectively who both lived in KSA, Marina who left Egypt at the age of two to

live in Kuwait, and Heba who was born and had always lived in Egypt. These students, except for Marina, reported feeling “embarrassed” and “child-like” when their friends and/or family members commented on their “impure” Egyptian Arabic. Yassin recounted in his habitual humoristic manner feeling “distressed” because “everyone makes fun of [his] Arabic [ECA]”:

> YASSIN: I don't know but uh grandma I don't know how but she just makes, I don't know if she's doing it just to take me off because if she is, she's doing a really good job. uh mom, mom I don't know but she, because I spent some time, a lot of time speaking with her in Arabic.[…] like you're speaking, you're speaking, they are like "wait, it's there, right there".
>
> SANAA: (laughing)
>
> YASSIN: It's like "What did I say?" and she points it and she starts laughing, then I feel distressed. It's very bad (laughter), and then I'd switch to English, and then she'd say "yeah you just stay with English, it's the best you can do". Um, no my dad's, my dad, yeah ok my dad, he also makes fun, yeah everyone makes fun of my Arabic apparently, so now that I think of it except an American [American/Egyptian] friend I have because we both suck at Arabic, so it's, it's, we're mutual. So, we just make fun out of each other. (Yassin/Interview)

His ECA got him unwanted attention at the AUC as well:

> YASSIN: I was talking, I was doing mixed martial arts the other day in the, in the mixed martial arts with my friends, and, and there was some girls sitting and while I was speaking in Arabic
>
> SANAA: Are you the trainer?
>
> YASSIN: Unfortunately. Yeah, I'm training them; they wanted to learn some stuff and I know mixed martial arts. So I was training them and uh while I was speaking in Arabic, then one girl while we were training, she was like "where are you from?" So I'm "Why do you ask?" she said "because you have a mad accent". It was devastating; it's like all the effort I put in speaking in Arabic is crashed right there.

SANAA: (laughter).

YASSIN: It was like ouch, it just swept out all the effort and I'm like "no my Arabic is good" and then she said "you're definitely not, you're definitely not a pure Egyptian or a pure Arab". I'm like "how do you know? How do you know? I hear myself, I sound exactly like you guys."

SANAA: (laughter).

YASSIN: And then we eventually reached the conclusion that I'm Canadian and she wins and she laughed, and she wins as all the others have done. um, but um grandma has been making fun of my Arabic recently; she's like uh whenever you pick, uh pick the phone, usually the other person on the other end thinks that uh he's talking to an American or foreigner, so that is very annoying to hear from your grandma every time you pick up the phone, so I stopped picking up the phone. Uh (laughter) mom has been um making jokes out of me; she keeps saying that ever since you were, you started learning Arabic, all your female objects *moannath* is *modhakkar* and *modhakkar* is *moannath* [Feminine is masculine and masculine is feminine]. (Yassin/Interview)

Mona repeatedly heard comments about her use of Lebanese-Jordanian words that she picked from her friends back at school in KSA.

I used to speak Lebanese or Jordanian with my friends there, and at home pretty much me and my siblings we speak English to each other, and Arabic with mom and dad most of the time. (Mona/Interview)

On the other hand, and despite living in Egypt all her life, Heba often used a few Syrian-Lebanese words because of the large number of Syrian and Lebanese friends she had.

HEBA: uhh usually I try to speak just the normal Egyptian Arabic because people always comment even my normal Egyptian Arabic there is uh there is a slight uh accent. I'm not really proud of it; it's kind of, for me it's embarrassing; for people they find it…

Sanaa: Cute (laughter)?

HEBA: *aiwaa!* [yes!] (laughter) and I don't think it's cute *khaless* [at all]. […] it bothers me when they say it's cute. I feel like I'm a child (laughter). (Heba/Interview)

This less-than-perfect proficiency among some students was not only limited to using non-ECA words or pronouncing some ECA words with a non-Egyptian accent. Marina who was born and lived in Kuwait all her life felt non-proficient for a different reason; she neither spoke with a foreign accent nor used non-Egyptian words, but she was unaware of new expressions that were typically used by teenagers, words and phrases that her parents did not use and thus never transmitted to her.

*"fakes" [Whatsoever/Not important] and all these words. I find myself asking like when people start talking only in Egyptian when we're outside the university; when we're in the university people speak half English-half Arabic, but when we're outside, people just start talking in this completely different language that is only for the youth of Egypt right now, like it's only been five years since they've been talking in this way, and I find myself asking what does that mean? What does that mean? All the time, so they figure it, they're like "you're not from Egypt. Are you?"* (Marina/Interview)

***ECA identity resolution.*** All four students whose Egyptian-ness was put into question because of their ECA that is not purely Egyptian- be it having a slightly foreign accent, using some non-ECA words, or being unfamiliar with new ECA vocabulary- resorted to several strategies to avoid getting unwanted attention from people around them, and to affirm their Egyptian-ness. Yassin, for example, intentionally used more ECA than before to improve his proficiency:

Throughout this summer it was mostly uh with my parents so I was still speaking with my classical old English-Arabic with my sisters and with my parents more Arabic. Then I went into AUC and I've been talking

> Arabic more but just to prove to myself that I know it and I've been trying hard throughout the year. At the beginning of course it was, it was quite difficult because people over here um it was from day one they spotted that they told me that I had issues with Arabic [ECA], so I had to deal with that at the beginning and then throughout gradually I've been picking up words with interactions with people, better in Arabic, I've been learning new words, learning new phrases and generally it's been improving throughout and then towards the beginning of this semester, uh again people went back to the mocking , um I still kept speaking in Arabic; generally I like to speak in Arabic because the more I speak the less people recognize that I don't know how to speak, and the better I'll become at the accent or whatsoever, and the fact that people criticize, I accept criticism without laughter, most of the time. But when people criticize me, I learn and I move on and I accept it and I move on and I accept the criticism. Uh so, so Arabic has been continuously improving definitely, definitely for sure. (Yassin/Interview)

When in doubt, Yassin used English to hide his lack of knowledge of ECA:

> Sometimes I say a totally wrong word that has a totally different meaning, which just ruins the whole sentence, so I have to recover myself in English. But, but I think I'm been [unintelligible] to pick it up, hopefully my memory will be quicker. (Yassin/Interview)

The other three students modified their linguistic practices to avoid projecting unfavourable Egyptian identities; they started limiting their use of English both inside and outside classes since speaking English most of the time is seen as showy/snobbish. Bassiouney (2014) explained that in Egypt, “[w]hile linguistic habits and linguistic realities associate English with positive indexes, linguistic ideologies do not do so. That is, second order indexes of English are negative” (p. 145).

> SANAA: OK. um so you're not using more Egyptian Arabic than in Kuwait?

MARINA: No, I am. Even in class surprisingly, like sometimes I find myself like some expressions, this is, yeah, so this is interchangeable, so some expressions I could say in English but then I choose to say them in Arabic I don't know because…

SANAA: You choose?

MARINA: Yeah.

SANAA: Why is that?

MARINA: I think because usually some classes I find that a lot of people are speaking in Egyptian so just to sort of join in and not be like the snobby kid who always speaks English but in most of my other classes where we only speak English then you know I stick to speaking in English.

SANAA: OK.

MARINA: But I do use it more often, and with friends as well.

(Marina/Interview)

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I speak in Arabic like uh outside of class I speak almost exclusively in Arabic unless there's like an international student sitting with us, just because it makes people feel more comfortable, like they don't wanna be talking in English, but in class uh I'd say it's a mixture according to what the teacher prefers. (Heba/Interview)

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SANAA: Then why is it now your Arabic is improving here at AUC and it wasn't necessarily the case in school?

MONA: Because uh my, my friend from school I used to speak with her in English.

SANAA: hem, and your friends now you speak with them in Arabic.

MONA: It depends, like I have a few people who I speak to in English but they're ones like who lived in America and then moved to Egypt, but the ones who were like raised here, they, like they can speak English, I'm not saying they can't, but they'd rather socialize in Arabic [ECA].

SANAA: In what way has your Arabic improved?

MONA: um, I don't know, it's becoming more Egyptian. (Mona/Interview)

On the other hand, for Aya who was not used to this high exposure to the English language because of attending a public school, the high exposure at AUC seemed to have caused her to react in a defensive way to protect her ECA from the perceived threat of the English language and American culture. Besides reading books in SA, she started watching movies in ECA, which she did not do before joining AUC:

> AYA: uh in the past, movies, English movies and I ya'anyI didn't like to watch Arabic movies cause ya'anyI know what will happen at the end ya'any (laughter).
>
> SANAA: You can predict the end (laughter).[…] but now I'm watching Arabic movies (laughter) on the Internet every night; I open ya'any any stupid uh old Arabic movie and uh I watch it cause it's like homesake.
>
> SANAA: Homesick.
>
> AYA: Homesick, homesick yes.
>
> SANAA: So they remind you of home?
>
> AYA: yes.
>
> SANAA: Why? What's the link?
>
> AYA: Not home but remind me that I'm still in Egypt (laughter).
>
> SANAA: OK.
>
> AYA: Do you understand?
>
> SANAA: hem because maybe, because sometimes at the AUC, you feel you're not in Egypt?
>
> AYA: Yes. uh everything is English, everything English, English, English. It's not about um I can't speak English; I deal with English, it's not a problem, but it's like ahly, beety, nasy [my family, my home,

my people] (laughter); it's something like this ya'any. So, it's like ya'any elhaneen bas lel a'araby we nas ela'arabiyeen ela'adiyeen [just nostalgia for Arabic and for the normal Arab people], but overall ya'any OK ya'any, but now I'm not watching English movies, khalas [enough]! (Aya/Interview)

***ECA enhancement***. All four students whose ECA has been subject to criticism reported an improvement in their ECA in the sense of acquiring a wider range of vocabulary and a more Egyptian accent due to using more ECA and less English than back in school:

HEBA: *laa* it's good *khalas*, *ya'any* now I'm good, I'm on the same page as everyone else *ya'any, fa* [I mean, so]. *ya'any, ya'any* my what is it called? *el-logha ela'ameyya* [colloquial]

SANAA: Colloquial?

HEBA: Colloquial, yes, it's very fluent *ya'any bas baa elli howa* the only issue is when it comes to writing and reading." (Heba/Interview)

***

MARINA: uh the way I speak; they said that I speak not my accent just my expressions like I have I use more Egyptian expressions which is yeah I used to find them weird last semester like things like *hasakeb* [I will skip] class which comes from skip.

SANAA: Skip, oh this is the first time I hear it. This is a teenagers' probably young people, right?

MARINA: *fakes* which is like "oh let it go" or "ignore it" (Marina/Interview)

Yassin is the only one who contended that AUC did not help improve his ECA, and that the improvement came from outside AUC:

SANAA: and um the AUC has not helped with Standard Arabic

YASSIN: oh no no no no, they haven't helped with the Colloquial Arabic. So um I mean I don't know if I told you, the one my neighbor the one who's under me. We usually spend, throughout the whole day we usually

> spend […] he is severely cool in Egyptian; he has these really wicked phrases. I don't know I can't describe it to you because it's so cool, that's why I usually have to wait for a second and then a moment of silence and then I'll ask him about it. It's, people outside AUC generally, I'm, I'm not talking about my friend, he's not in AUC by the way. Yeah people generally outside, they have a very good command of the language of the colloquial Arabic and they know really nice phrases and stuff. Over here probably they do know it and if I said it, they'll all know it, but it's because they've been talking so much in English, I don't get anything about half of them. I mean I do know a lot from my friends outside much more than I learn from inside. (Yassin/Interview)

During the focus group, Yassin reiterated his belief that AUC did not help him enhance his ECA proficiency:

> I see AUC more in speaking English than Arabic, despite the fact that they're Arabs and Egyptians. The linguistic identity of Egyptians is Arabic, you cannot not agree on that. For a community to refuse speaking Arabic and speak English, it's not gonna help improve your Arabic skills. (Yassin/Focus group)

Mahmoud disagreed with Yassin and suggested that the latter was not taking advantage of the available opportunities at AUC and reminded him of these opportunities:

> MAHMOUD: Are there opportunities here at AUC that help with Arabic?
> YASSIN: I mean there are courses, yeah but
> MAHMOUD: There are clubs, there are ..
> YASSIN: Yeah (Focus group)

#### *5.5.4.3 English Language*

***English language identity crisis***. Predictably, Aya and Elham underwent a language identity crisis as a result of this new and unprecedented immersion in the English language at AUC. Aya was feeling lost between English and Arabic:

> I feel I'm losing both of them. I'm lost between them. I don't know what to do. (Aya/Interview)

Aya's comprehension of written English has been apparently good since high school; however, her speaking and listening skills were not sufficiently good, yet she never realized it till she joined AUC. In the following excerpt from her very first interview, she narrated an incident in which her English listening skills went through a severe test that revealed her very limited comprehension of English when spoken by native speakers:

> And all the attenders [attendees of a public lecture on English literature] were English teachers, so they were like (nodding. Oh my God, you are so *ya'any*, and I didn't understand anything. Really? *begad*? [really] (laughter). And *ya'any* all of them were teachers, English teachers, and I didn't understand anything and it's like (laughter) I was in another world or something. (Aya/Interview)

Elham's identity crisis was less severe than Aya's because of her exposure to English spoken by native speakers prior to joining AUC. Nonetheless she also felt confused:

> And when I came here like I felt like confused until now I'm still confused but I was like really confused, I felt like I can't handle classes in English, especially in calculus and chemistry cause like I used to excel these two subjects at my school but here sometimes I sit in class and say nothing and don't understand a word what the professors are saying. (Elham/Interview)

For the excellent students that Elham and Aya were, as two of the ten top achievers in *thanaweyya amma* nationwide, not understanding some of the AUC teachers' accents and not participating in class initially tied them in knots and hindered their class participation. They were not able to verify their identity as excellent versatile students:

> Yeah, I want to participate but I can't because I have like sometimes I don't understand the question, so I don't understand what exactly is she saying but when she solves the problem I say 'oh I knew that I knew how to do that, but if she only spoke in Arabic' (laughter), and sometimes when I understand the question I feel like a little bit shy to answer because like I don't have like a strong English so I say I wish I can speak in Arabic (laughter). (Elham/Interview)

In Pavlenko (2003)'s study of international students enrolled in a TESOL program, "[p]articipants who viewed themselves as nonnative speakers, admitted feeling passive, incompetent, unimportant and invisible" (Zacharias, 2012, p. 235). These feelings of inadequacy and frustration were also reported by Gao et al. (2015) study of Chinese students who displayed a "marked drop of self- confidence in the freshman year [that] indicated students' initial confusion, frustration, and adjustment to their university life, especially in study competition among peers" (p. 146). One of the participants in their study shared a very similar experience to Aya's and Elham's:

> When I was in my English reading class, I found my spoken English is [was] so poor that sometimes I don't [didn't] dare to open my mouth. ... I first time realize[d] my condition of English learning. So dangerous! I can imagine when our high school students [came for] reunion, the first thing I want to tell them is my poor English. (Gao et al., 2015, p. 146)

On the other hand, and unexpectedly, Mahmoud and Yassin who are native speakers of English also faced a challenge regarding their English language identity at AUC. Their impeccable English pronunciation and accent drew unwanted attention that casted doubt on their Egyptian-ness, which made them uncomfortable:

> MAHMOUD: sometimes in class, it just happened two days ago in Physics class, a girl she's excellent, and then she's like *"khadna eeh*

*delwa'ty?"* [What have we just taken?] *oltelha "I have no idea", she looked at me keda* and then mid-way through the class, she's like *"enta lahgetak eeh?"* [What is your mother tongue?] I said *"masry"* [Egyptian]

SANAA: (laughing)

MAHMOUD: (laughing)I was like *"masry"* [Egyptian] and she said *"el english beta'ak helw awi"* [Your English is so nice]. I said "I'm American too, *ya'any"* I. I don't like, I don't like saying "oh I'm American-Egyptian", and it happened also like two weeks ago, I applied for a research I wanna be a research assistant for graduate students in bio-technology, uh so I was sitting with a person and it was a girl sitting on the other table and I was like "Thank you so much for this opportunity" and then the girl was, she was like, *"eeh dah, how anta* what major are you?" I was like "Biology", she was *"howa enta masry?"* [Are you Egyptian?] I said like "yeah". and she was like *"asl enta lahgetak helwa"* [Your accent is very nice].

SANAA: English.

MAHMOUD: Yes English accent, I said "oh yeah because I'm American" and she said "Oh that's fine, that's fine" (Mahmoud/Interview)

***Resolution and Enhancement.*** These two groups of students negotiated their English language identities differently. Aya and Elham, who were struggling with English at first, improved their proficiency because of their immersion in the language at AUC. Elham was no longer afraid to make mistakes while speaking in English, and consequently started participating more frequently in class discussions; "Self-confidence related to English learning was no longer a burning issue for most students" (Gao et al., 2015, p. 147):

> Now I do. Now I participate more than at the beginning. I try, like now it's easier for me to understand, like because I studied the chemical terms and the calculus terms, so it's a little bit easier. (Elham/Interview)

On the other hand, all the interviewed students demonstrated awareness of the different social contexts they found themselves in, and made conscious

decisions “to convey a linguistic identity while masking another depending on their desired self-representation” (Vasilopoulos, 2015, p. 63). Mahmoud adapted his linguistic practices to different social situations; he used English with his friends but only in situations where it would not draw unwanted attention. He tried to hide his English fluency in situations where he felt listeners would wrongly position him as a “cool cocky dude”; these situations were both inside AUC and outside it, for example in some classes where students were used to asking questions in Arabic as well as on the Egyptian streets:

> MAHMOUD: When I'm hanging out with my friends and going to a movie or doing whatever car-driving or eating at Shabrawy [popular affordable eatery] or public transportation, then I'm an Egyptian. So yeah, it's more prominent because I'm in Egypt obviously wanna say Egypt is, my Egyptian nationality is a bit more fun, it's even more out there than my American because I'd feel that I want to hold back my American because I don't wanna bring attention to what I'm saying. For example, in class if people are asking questions in Arabic, in calculus for example, last semester when the spring
>
> SANAA: Spring
>
> MAHMOUD: yeah spring. uh *“ya doctor ana mesh fahma ya’any eeh dah? tab momken nerage' section elli ableeha? ana mesh fahma haga”* [Doctor, I don’t understand, I mean what is this? Can we revise the previous section? I don’t understand a thing] I would usually say "I don't understand this section, I don't understand this part but if I would, if I would ask or when I did ask, I'd ask in Arabic because I don't wanna bring those unnecessary eyes on me that are like *"eeh dah da walad amriki dah byetkalem baa w-gamed geddan baa howa”* [oh wow look at this kid. He’s all American and talks in English and he's too cool for us]. That's what they think. So, yeah, I'd usually try to hide the American part of me because I don't wanna bring it up, I don't wanna bring the "oh! he's cocky, oh he's cocky speaking in English, oh he's *da gamed geddan baa manetkalemsh ma'ah* [We're not going to talk to him because he's too cool for us] and so on"

SANAA: So, the example you gave is related to AUC.

MAHMOUD: uhuh.

SANAA: Is it the case outside AUC as well?

MAHMOUD: um well I don't usually speak in English outside AUC. With my friends, with the normal public I speak in Arabic *a'ady* [naturally], why would I speak in English?

[…]

Also when I'm on the phone when I'm walking in the street, usually I talk to my friends in English but when I see people around me I try to lessen English and do the Arabic. I don't want people to think that I'm this *shab gamed geddan* [very cool dude]

SANAA: Cool (laughing)

MAHMOUD: *shab* cool [cool dude]. They'd look at me and they have no problem looking at me inside AUC or outside AUC. I don't know why. But you won't find this in America; if you're talking in Chinese, Japanese, oh ok, piece of cake

Mahmoud and other participants practiced what Gardner (1985) called additive bilingualism whereby "two sets of languages, behavioral patterns and values, each specified for particular contexts" coexist and are used depending on situational needs (as cited in Yongwei, 2009, p. 158). They seemed to:

> exercise agency in choosing which language, accent, genre, register, and code depending on context, interlocutor, purpose, and desired outcome. Bilinguals and multilinguals possess a range of diverse identities that can be switched on and off in strategic ways so that they may fit in and be socially accepted and, conversely, to set themselves apart from the group. (Vasilopoulos, 2015, p. 63).

They "possessed a range of diverse identities depending on the contexts and the reference groups with whom they were interacting. Identity switches took place strategically on the part of the participants. In certain contexts, where there was a difference between one's inner knowledge of self and an outer

performance claiming a self, the participant made a conscious identity switch" (Kim, 2003, p. 144). This sensitivity to context was applicable to situations on campus too:

> MARINA: in terms of practice, I like, I concentrate more; when I approach someone at university, I don't start talking in English, like I ask them first, if they look Egyptian, I ask them first in Arabic, something in Arabic just because like I wanna be sensitive to that sort of thing.
>
> SANAA: On campus?
>
> MARINA: Yes on campus.
>
> SANAA: Because, why? Do you think, what would happen if you approach them in English?
>
> MARINA: I think it's sort of insensitive if they're not comfortable talking in English.
>
> SANAA: Because some people here are not comfortable speaking in English?
>
> MARINA: Yeah, I think some people prefer to speak in Arabic and they're only forced to do it in class. So, I wouldn't want to put them in a difficult situation, like for example, if a friend is talking to them about something, asking them about their opinion, like "we have to do the same work, we have to [unintelligible]", I'll start talking in Arabic first and if I find them using a lot of English in their conversation, then I'd sort of transition into that.

This conscious strategy of concealing one's English language identity was reported by other studies conducted in societies where native-like English speech is discouraged in social settings. A study among "10 adult bilingual Korean-English speakers who have lived abroad for over 4 years" showed that there was:

> pressure on bilinguals to conceal their L2 ability/identity. Strategically, participants used the L1/L2 language to blend in or conversely to distinguish themselves. Finally, L2 use similar to that acquired and

> spoken while abroad in the target community (TC) was reserved to interactions with non-Koreans or select individuals with comparable experience as bilinguals or in professional contexts that required demonstrations of their English fluency. (Vasilopoulos, 2015, p. 68)

Just like Mahmoud, these Korean students were reluctant to manifest their remarkable English fluency in class because of their "desire to blend in with their peers" especially if speaking English fluently was going to "be viewed by others as a way of showing off" (Vasilopoulos, 2015, p, 70). Another study conducted in Malaysia showed that "identity, as expressed by choice of language, is not static but always in a state of flux, and it is highly localized and dependent on the localized interactive contexts" (Kim, 2003, p. 149).

# Chapter VI: Discussion

## 6.1. Introduction

In this section, I summarize the major findings related to religious, national, and linguistic identity construction and negotiation, and I discuss them in the light of previous literature.

## 6.2. Religious Identity

Religious identity ranked high on the identity prominence hierarchy for most students. This is not surprising in the Egyptian context where religion is an important component of the Egyptian collective identity; in fact, one widespread statement in the Egyptian society is *el-masri motadayyin bitab'u* [The Egyptian is inherently religious]. Religion, for many, constitutes a basis of their personal and social identities as it plays an important role in organizing their hierarchy of identities (Peek, 2005, p. 219), helps integrate other identities within their selves and societies (Pecchenino, 2009, p. 31), provides context to their lives (Mayo Clinic, 2006, as cited in Pecchenino, 2009, p. 31), "suppl[ies] the plot for the stories of [their] lives, singly and collectively, and [is] bound up with [their] deepest beliefs about life, the universe and everything" (Joseph, 2004, p. 172).

For most participants, however, religious identity did not rank as high on the salience hierarchy as it did on the prominence hierarchy. Several studies (De Haan & Schulenberg, 1997; Kotesky, Walker, & Johnson, 1990; Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, & Waite, 1995) found "evidence that individuals become more religious as they transition from adolescence to adulthood, including increases in commitment and in intrinsic religiosity [religious prominence]" (as cited in Levkowitz, 2005). This increase in the importance of religion reported by many emerging adults does not translate into a similar increase in their religious

practices; “their attendance at religious services actually decreases” (Johnston, Bachman, & O’Malley, 1995, as cited in Lefkowitz, 2005, p. 42; Lefkowitz, 2005).

The discrepancy between the prominence and salience of the participants’ religious identity may be a reflection of the discrepancy between the ideal image of the Egyptian in the collective Egyptian mind as highly and inherently religious and the lived reality. This very discrepancy was criticized by Al-Aswany, an Egyptian writer, in his article “Are Egyptians really religious?” in which he shared several anecdotes he had witnessed during his work as a dentist, where people who claimed to be highly religious acted completely against religious spirit and teachings. It should be noted, however, that of the ten students who ranked their religious identity first, four students (Aya; Mona; Mostafa; Khaled) reported that religious and national identities were equally placed at the top of their identities’ hierarchy.

For most participants, there was no reported change in their religious identity. It seems that “the college experience has little or no effect on the religiosity of the majority of college students” (Reimer, 2010, p. 393). In a study that examined emerging adults’ perceptions of changes in their religious views because of the transition to university, their “responses were rated as indicating becoming neither more nor less religious” (Lefkowitz, 2005, p. 5). This relative stability of religious identity for most college students is, according to Clydesdale (2007a), due to storing it in an “identity box” prior to joining college, which results in the college experience having little effect on it;

> In fact, the majority of students, including some religious students, do not engage college course material in a way that may challenge beliefs, because they are more interested in credentials than worldview formation. (as cited in Reimer, 2010, p. 396)

Reimer (2010) argued that "[s]ome of the effects of university education on one's religious views may not surface until after Clydesdale's "lockbox" has been reopened after college" (p. 405).

The prominence and salience of their religious identity seemed to play a significant role in how the students constructed and negotiated this identity. Religious identity prominence and salience were apparently key factors in the students' perception of the AUC community in relation to religion, and consequently their construction and negotiation of their religious identity. The important role played by the prominence and salience of religious identity at the time of joining AUC is explained below, a role in:

- whether the students would have worries about their religiousness at AUC or not; initial expectations of the nature of the AUC community, whereby expecting a "morally loose" environment, based at least partly on stereotypes, caused students with a prominent religious identity to feel varying degrees of fear for their religiousness;
- whether they experienced an identity crisis or not; although most students demonstrated a prominent religious identity, only those who also had a salient religious identity experienced an obvious religious identity crisis. This finding is in line with Regnerus and Uecker (2007) who "note[d] that many religious identities are so vague that the student would not recognize a challenge to their religious beliefs if one did arise in class" (as cited in Reimer, 2010, p. 396). It also disproves Bryant and Astin (2008) who found that religiously-engaged students "experience less spiritual struggle than the average student does" (p. 21). This discrepancy could be due to several reasons; first, their sample included only 1% Muslims; second, it included students from

46 different types of institutions (public, private nonsectarian, and religious); lastly, it was conducted in the United States in a society with different social, economic, and cultural characteristics from the Egyptian society.

- And whether they were willing to exert the necessary effort to maintain/enhance that identity.

The presence and intensity of the initial fear was mediated by two factors, previous exposure to alternative worldviews and lifestyles, and sustained contact with family. Most participants had already been exposed to alternate worldviews and lifestyles through education, media, and/or travel abroad. Some other studies have reported that "[m]any religiously conservative youth have been exposed to 'secular' ideas and lifestyles well before they enter college (Regnerus 2007; Smith and Denton 2005), and thus come ready to resist them in college" (Reimer, 2010, p. 396). On the other hand, students who experienced a decrease in family support in religious identity construction, due to staying far from home, were afraid to lose their religious identity the most. Parents are "the most common identity formation partners" (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010, p. 76); thus "[y]outh religiosity is highly dependent on how much they are exposed to religion by their parents" (Petts, 2015, pp. 78-79). This finding about the role family, particularly parents, play in religious identity construction is consistent with other literature which reported that parents are the most important social force in determining their children's religiosity (De Hoon & Van Tubergen, 2014). In fact, "[r]esearch reveals high religious identity, paired with like-minded parents, is associated with increased family communication ("Theorizing Religious," 2003)" (Mullikin, 2006, p. 190). Parents' involvement in adolescents' identity development can enhance it, contrary to

what previous models of identity development believed. Kielsing and Sorell (2009) explained that “parents who remain a vital part of adolescent development while giving their son or daughter space to become their own person are not interfering with the development of agency and an internal locus of control in the adolescent, but actually supporting and enhancing it” (p. 265).

The perceived challenges to their religious identity, related to either AUC environment or liberal education, induced “vulnerability, deep reflection, and/or consideration of ideas and philosophies with which [they were] unfamiliar (Bryant & Astin, 2008, p. 14). This in turn triggered:

> an identity-shaping process […] by encouraging them to think about who they are with respect to new ideas that may reside outside the scope of their past experiences. In this way, the disruption to identity is the consideration of new knowledge that may revise students’ existing self-definitions as they attempt to integrate that knowledge into their current understandings of self and the world. (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010, p. 83)

In their struggle to resolve their religious identity disruption, these participants went through a re-exploration of their religious identity; an “exploration-in-depth” not an “exploration-in-breadth” that “is indicative of continued evaluation of one’s commitments after they have been chosen, and may indicate a maintenance process for one’s commitments” (Mclean & Pasupathi, 2012, p. 10). Exploration is usually stimulated by the endeavour “to balance congruent and incongruent self perceptions and the feedback one gets from significant others” (Kiesling & Sorell, 2009, p. 267). This in-depth exploration led the participants to learn more about their religion, consequently enhancing their religious identity. Findings from previous research showed that challenges to religious identity strengthen it. For instance, challenges to Muslim students’ religious identity in the United States following the 9/11 tragic events

eventually strengthened that identity (Peek, 2005). Peek's study reported that Muslim students were frequently asked by both friends and complete strangers about their religious faith and beliefs; thus, to be able to respond to those queries, they looked for answers in "the Qur'an and other religious documents. As they searched for answers, they felt they were becoming 'better Muslims' and drawing even closer to the faith. Thus, the tragedy of September 11 had the inadvertent effect of causing many Muslims to learn more about Islam, which over time strengthened their religious identities" (Peek, 2005, p. 231). Similarly, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) argued that university students do not renounce their faith, but they develop more tolerance and openness (as cited in Reimer, 2010, p. 400). The participants' openness to other worldviews led to a noticeable increase in their tolerance. This finding corroborates Bryant and Astin (2008) who reported that spiritual struggles during college strengthen students' acceptance of people of different faiths (p, 21). Data from Reimer (2010) "suggest that Clydesdale's lockbox is semi-permeable, and while basic religious identities do not change often, orthodoxy and exclusive religious boundaries are softened from being immersed in the waters of liberal higher education, at least for a minority" (p. 405).

Students with both a prominent and salient religious identity who experienced a religious identity crisis looked for identity agents available to them at and/or outside AUC to negotiate their religious identity and resolve that crisis; these agents were students' clubs with a religious orientation, religious institutions such as mosques and churches, and more participation in spiritual rituals such as praying, fasting, reading and learning Quran, and going to church regularly because "[r]eligious organizations provide a safe environment for discussing and practicing beliefs and, ultimately, constructing religious

identities" (Peek, 2005, p. 228). Chaudhury and Miller (2008) found that Muslim college students in the United states resorted to students' clubs and organizations like the Muslim Students Association (p. 401) and to "participation in ritualistic prayers" when they felt their religious identity was threatened (p. 397).

Finally, individual choice played a crucial role in the students' religious identity formation (Mullikin, 2006, p. 189), which is in line with modern theories that "support the increasingly personalized and self-defining nature of post-modern identity formation experiences within current generations" (Stoppa, 2016, p. 20). Religious identities are usually formed at home through interaction with one's parents and family members and later through membership in religious groups; however, in post-adolescence, they become increasingly a matter of individual choice (Alwin et al., 2006; Mullikin, 2002) as post-adolescents search for alternative viewpoints to support their beliefs (Mullikin, 2002) and engage in a process of identity exploration in which they question their previous beliefs and choices (Pastorino & Dunham, 1997, as cited in Mullikin, 2002). In his famous theory of faith development, Fowler (1981) argued that college students:

> tend to move from a faith that is "synthetic-conventional" and largely bound to external authorities toward a more self-defined and critically examined, or "individuative-reflective," faith. During this time, individuals begin to take responsibility for discerning their own beliefs and to arrive at understandings of spirituality and faith that are more intentionally chosen and self-constructed. (as cited in Stoppa, 2016, p. 3)

Likewise, Parks (2000) suggested that during their college years, "students move from more 'authority-bound' ways of knowing toward more self-authored and intentional spiritual identities that students may arrive at through

experiences of ‘ship-wreck, gladness, and amazement’” (as cited in Stoppa, 2016, p. 5).

### 6.3. National Identity

The Revolution, as a national crisis, resurrected the participants’ national identity, awakened their national pride, and engendered unprecedented interest and participation in politics. The intensity of this newly-found national pride and political participation, however, withered in favour of alternating waves of hope and disappointment with the unfolding of the post-revolution events; “whereas pride can indeed be more dependent on contextual events, attachment seems to resonate more with the notion of (national) identity, which is less conditioned by contingent events, since it serves to define ‘who I am’” (Antonsich, 2009, p. 290).

Participants constructed and negotiated their national identity in various ways, just as was the case for religious identity. Their unique backgrounds and experiences had an obvious impact on how they constructed and negotiated it. As stated in the results chapter, most participants constructed their national identity calmly without any perceived threats or challenges. Edensor (2002) argued that “[n]ational identity is robust even where no one is dying in its name. It’s just that its expression and experience is ‘usually neither spectacular nor remarkable, but is generated in mundane, quotidian forms and practices'” (as cited in Whitaker, 2005, p. 585).

A few participants, however, underwent varying degrees of national identity crises that were related to the three elements that structure national identity: “(1) salience of national identity, (2) satisfaction by fulfilment of its functions, and (3) adoption of national culture" (Korostelina, 2007, p. 185).

These participants' national identity crises were related to 1) language proficiency- their low ECA proficiency and/or their impeccable English fluency (Yassin; Marina; Mahmoud; Heba), 2) their disappointment with the AUC community as their main Egyptian experience (Marina/Yassin) and with Egypt and Egyptians in general (Heba), or, in the case of Aya, 3) feeling distressed by her non-Egyptian Egyptology teacher's "inaccurate" information about ancient Egyptian history. The first two types of crises were closely related to the second element of national identity "satisfaction by fulfilment of its functions" that "has to do with the national identity's fulfilment of its five psychological functions for its members; i.e. "(1) providing self-esteem, (2) bestowing social status, (3) personal safety, (4) group support and protection, and (5) recognition by ingroup" (Korostelina, 2007, p. 185). Participants whose Egyptian-ness was questioned due to their linguistic practices were not recognized as Egyptians by their in-group of fellow Egyptian students.

In addition, Heba's Egyptian national identity was neither a source of self-esteem for her, nor gave her a strong sense of belonging, nor did she adopt its culture. Thus, the Egyptian national identity did not fulfil any of its three main functions for Heba, hence her being the only student to question her own Egyptian-ness: "Am I Egyptian? I could beg to differ" (Heba/Interview). Her national identity was not salient, given that "[s]alience of national identity reflects the importance of a given national identity to a person who belongs to that nation. This includes a strong sense of belonging to that nation as well as a positive attitude toward one's nation as opposed to a negative one towards other nations, that are shared with other people in his/her nation". Moreover, she did not adopt its culture's "traditions, values, customs, meanings, ethics, holidays, clothes, and foods" (Korostelina, 2007, p. 185).

These various degrees of national identity crises were quickly resolved. The participants resorted to several negotiation strategies to resolve any tension. Those whose Egyptian-ness was questioned on linguistic grounds adapted their linguistic practices to position themselves as Egyptians; they started, for instance, using more ECA and less English to avoid attracting unwanted attention to their impeccable English accent. They also redefined the link between language and national identity whereby they showed more acceptance towards the use of English at the expense of ECA when the motives were not to intentionally position oneself away from one's Egyptian-ness, such as educational and economic motives. Antonsich (2009) explained that

> When globalisation was welcomed as a source of economic, social or intellectual opportunities, enhancing the welfare of the individual, generally the respondent adopted a 'progressive' stance in her thick description of the nation. In other words, the culturally thick conception of the nation was not associated to exclusivist or chauvinist attitudes, but empowered the subject, who therefore felt strong enough in her identity to open herself and her 'home' to the Other. (p. 292)

A more detailed account of this negotiation process was presented and discussed in the results section on language identity.

On the other hand, Yassin and Marina's disappointment with AUC as an atypical Egyptian community became mild as they grew more aware of the relatively diverse AUC community fabric and started to see beyond their initial impressionistic lenses and understand the complexities within each of their AUC mates' identities. Yassin also tried "to convince people who speak English; [he's] been speaking Arabic with them so that they will speak Arabic as well" (Yassin). Finally, Aya stopped feeling distressed in front of the perceived threat

posed to her national identity by a non-Egyptian professor "distorting" the ancient Egyptian history she was so proud of and her inability to defend the "correct" version she was taught at school. She now even doubted the accuracy of her school history curriculum and became more tolerant of her professor's pronunciation mistakes of ancient Egyptian monuments.

Linguistic practices and proficiency played an important role in the national identity construction and negotiation of AUC freshman students. Results suggest that some students' national identity was questioned either by themselves (Heba) or by their entourage (Yassin and Marina) because of their low ECA proficiency. Bassiouney (2014) explained that

> in the projection of public discourse, the code that one chooses directly reflects on how one positions her or himself in relation to others: as an insider or outsider, as an Egyptian or a foreigner, as an Egyptian with no loyalty to Egypt or as a loyal citizen, as a typical man in the street or as an Egyptian who does not share the same characteristics that unify Egyptians. (p. 41)

While this study confirms the link between ECA and national identity (Bassiouney, 2014), it reveals a weak, often absent, link between SA and national identity for most participants (10 out of 11). This could be due to Egypt's political orientation away from Pan-Arabism to Sadat's "Egypt first" policy that was reflected not only in Egyptian political orientation but also in Egyptian educational policies, arts, and the media. Since 1980, "Egyptian children have been taught that their affiliation is first and foremost to their country, Egypt, then to the nation (the Arab world), and finally to their religion" (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 98).

The findings of this study also confirm that religion, is an important component of the Egyptian national identity. "Indeed, […] the only consistent

thread of identity left to Egyptian society has been 'that of a religious community'" (Vatikiotis, 1985, as cited in Cook, 2000, p. 480), whereby Islam, as a spiritual identity, is the main signifier of Egyptian nationalism (Gamie, 2014, p. 247)

Finally, contrary to the worries that many Egyptians have about foreign education in general, and AUC in particular as a foreign institution that allegedly distorts its Egyptian students' national identity, participants in this study either reported a stable national identity or else an enhancement of that identity in indirect ways, such as participation in student societies that do community service, exposure to Egyptian music and arts, or being taught by a proud Egyptian professor (Marina's Engineering professor). AUC seems to offer opportunities for national identity enhancement for those who seek them. This was particularly true because of the 2011 Revolution that brought Egyptian identity issues to the forefront of public and academic discussions. Several political debates and lectures were organized at AUC; several courses dealt with the Revolution, for example in one of my analytical writing classes I invited a Revolution graffiti artist to give a talk to my students. The AUC started *The University on the Square* project that documents the eighteen days of the 25 January Revolution.

### 6.4 Language Identity

Starting the second interview which was conducted during the participants' second semester at AUC, all participants who had displayed signs of struggle and distress regarding their language identities earlier, seemed to have already overcome that initial confusion. They demonstrated agentic powers of negotiation, through constructing their own meanings and assigning them to the languages they used, in order to navigate the various sociolinguistic

contexts they found themselves in, both inside and outside AUC. They seemed to use these languages with ease and to have compromised what each language is associated with and to have neutralized possible language identity conflicts. Their linguistic views and practices paint a complex picture, unlike the simplistic binary one held by critics of foreign education in Egypt. Djité (2006) pointed out that:

> A cursory look at what people have always done and do with language(s) and an epistemological approach to their language repertoire(s), especially in multilingual contexts, suggest that the reality may be much more complex than the “black and white” picture that is often painted. Indeed, language choice and use in multilingual contexts show individuals and communities to be very active agents, whose language practices reveal an incredible capacity to empower themselves where and when it matters most. (p. 2)

For students like Heba, Yassin, Mahmoud, Marina, and Mona, as is the case for many other AUC students who graduated from foreign/international schools, English is not viewed as a foreign language; they have been using it along with ECA since they were very young children:

> I think I feel like, I was thinking about this the other day and I realized we, like my brothers and I we don't have a first language. As in *ya’any* we don't have a language which is just perfect. You know what I mean? Like some people have Arabic as their first language and then they start learning English, and others have English as their first language, then they start learning Arabic. I think for us it was thrown at us both at the same time, so we never have like one we're completely comfortable in.(Heba/Interview)

Thus, they switch from one to the other without realizing it:

> *ya’any* for example in a regular conversation you don't realize you're speaking two different languages, like you start talking to me in Arabic, I'll start answering in English, it's normal, it's not a problem, or for example

> different kinds of Arabic; it's uh we don't even feel it's like a real issue, we don't feel like we're doing anything weird. (Heba/Interview)

The English they speak has been adapted and Arabized, such as the examples stated earlier "*asayyev"* [I save] whereby they used the English verb "save" but conjugated it following ECA grammatical rules, and "*shewak-s"* [forks] and "*enzel-ing"* [going out] whereby they used ECA words in their English sentences but added English suffixes to them. Thus, the English they use is one that "is adapted so as to serve more effectively as a lingua franca, a language no longer the property of its native speakers but appropriated by […] its users for their own purposes" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 147). As Canagarajah has said, with the increasing use of World Englishes to communicate, we ought to "think of English as a plural language that embodies multiple norms and standards. English should be treated as a multinational language" (as cited in Pedersen, 2010, p. 302).

The English used by these participants is English as an International Language (EIL), not the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) that previous Egyptian generations used to learn at school. EIL learning has now a broader role in identity development as it

> helps to construct learner identities of various kinds – competitive job hunters on the international market, competent professionals, successful ambassadors of the native culture, among others. English is not, in fact, a 'post-identity' language, one that is 'no longer a foreign language', as Lo Bianco (2005) has suggested. By being associated with a wide range of 'imagined communities' (Norton, 2001), EIL is acquiring an ever more pervasive role in learners' identity construction. (Yihong, 2009, p. 115)

Lambert (1963a, 1963b, 1967, 1975) has put forward two types of bilingualism, namely additive and subtractive. Additive bilingualism means that acquiring a target language and its culture happens while maintaining one's native language and culture. In contrast, substractive bilingualism entails erosion or replacement of the native cultural identity, which can cause "a sense of loss of [one's] native cultural identity or isolation from the native cultural community" (as cited in Yongwei, 2009, p. 157). Alternatively, Gao (1996, 2001, 2002) proposed "productive bilingualism" which happens when "the command of the target language and that of the native language positively reinforce each other; deeper understanding and appreciation of the target culture goes hand in hand with deeper understanding and appreciation of the native culture" (as cited in Yongwei, 2009, p. 157). The participants in this study seemed to represent all three types of bilingualism, subtractive, additive and productive. Moreover, some students seemed to have moved from one type of bilingualism to the other during the duration of this study.

English was seen by some students, such as Mostafa, Mahmoud and Khaled, as simply a practical tool to achieve academic and career success, unrelated to their identity. This result corroborates the idea of Ushioda (2013) who suggested that

> while students might have very clear ideas about the importance of English for accessing information, international communication and, not least, future careers, it might be that they "simply perceive English as a practical tool, skill or necessity (much like being able to use a computer or drive a car) that does not particularly implicate their self-concept or identity." (as stated in Henry & Goddard, 2015, p. 256)

While I disagree with the conspiracy theorists who view international education and almost anything Western as a Trojan horse with a hidden

agenda to estrange Egyptian children and youth and destroy their sense of belongingness to their culture, I cannot dismiss the impact that at least *some* of these imported educational systems seem to have on their students' knowledge of Egyptian culture, history and SA proficiency. They, undeniably, "contribute to weakening their students' SA proficiency, and also teach them the history of the foreign countries that they belong to without teaching them the history or geography of their country Egypt, which [can] make them strangers in their own nation and secluded from their environment" [Translation mine] (Basyuni, 2015, p. 202).

The worries concerning the loss of SA competency manifested by most participants are not based on mere emotional attachment. Many participants reported the erosion of their SA. This affirms the predictions by some researchers and educators that EMI policies in the Arab World would imply "that Arabic will be sidelined and will play a minor educational role" (Troudi, 2009, p. 199). However, this deterioration of their SA had begun much earlier, in their childhood. SA is marginalized in most foreign and international schools in Egypt in favour of other subjects deemed more useful. Consequently, most graduates of these schools come to AUC incompetent in SA. Parents of these students, at least some of them, do exert an effort to teach their children SA and encourage them to read in it; for example, Mahmoud's mother used to teach him SA back in the US using the famous study book *selah el-telmiz*, and Mona's parents encouraged her to read the SA books they had at home. However, their efforts seemed, based on the participants' perceptions, generally insufficient to guarantee a good SA level for their children.

Over my sixteen years of teaching at three different private universities in Egypt, I have noticed first-hand on different occasions the much lower than

expected SA level of some graduates of foreign/international schools. The last incident was an AUC student whose attempt to write survey questions in SA resulted in severely awkward sentences that did not make any sense at all. Moreover, my own experience with teaching SA to my two multilingual children, who study the IB programme in a French-medium school and who are fluent in English, proved quite challenging, particularly with my youngest son whose English speaking, reading and writing proficiency far precedes his French and SA proficiency, with SA at the very bottom of his linguistic proficiency hierarchy. On several occasions when I met with his French and SA teachers, the former expressed their concern about English being a competing and more attractive language for their students than French since it is the language of media that the children watch, Disney and Hollywood productions, while the latter complained about both the limited time they met the children and the marginal place SA holds in the school curriculum that did not allow them and their students much room to improve the students' SA level.

The preference for English-American media among young people is not only restricted to Middle-Eastern societies like Egypt. Participants in Gao et al. (2015) longitudinal study which investigated the EFL learning and self-identity development of Chinese university students also reported a clear preference for American movies:

> "Without attractive plots, skilled actors and fabulous visual effects, Chinese TV programs are never a match to American ones" (UC, I5); Ren Xiaodong stated, "After you gradually get used to American movies, your entire perspective of appreciation and your views will be changed. ... And then you'll be reluctant to watch Chinese movies. I hardly watch Chinese movies now" (UE, I5). (p.150)

Nor is it only restricted to Asian societies like China; it is also applicable to

European countries like “Germany and Spain, where cultural artefacts are predominantly L1-mediated” and in Nordic countries such as Sweden where “English may be implicated in young people’s identity work to a greater extent […and] many of their most important cultural experiences may be English-mediated” (Henry & Goddard, 2015, p. 258).

On the other hand, although most of the students expressed concern about their SA level, only a few, Mahmoud, Yassin, and Aya followed up on their plans to maintain and enhance their SA by taking SA courses and/ or reading extra-curricular books. The other students had more important academic priorities than investing effort and time in improving a language that most of them already found difficult. Even Alia, the only graduate of a foreign school who had advanced SA proficiency, reported a deterioration in her SA level after joining AUC. Thus, the erosion of SA among AUC students is a reality not just the outcome of emotional attachment:

> The dangers of English dominance are very real and often destructive to local languages. At the same time, people find ways, as Bhabha has described, to resist—or at least negotiate—forces of hegemony (such as colonization) often through the very language and cultural practices associated with these forces. (Pedersen, 2010, p. 302)

Bilingual or trilingual identity development can take different forms that do not necessarily or automatically lead to the negation of one’s native language, religion, and culture; instead, “interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains differences without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, 1994, as cited in Pedersen, 2010, p. 299). English, for instance, perceived by some as an imperialistic language is increasingly becoming one of the languages of Islam. Rosowsky (2010, 2011) argued that in the present age, with respect to young

people's identity construction, "[t]he emerging status of English as a language of Islam in the global Muslim context is already leading to co-sanctified language practices" (as cited in Rosowsky, 2012, p. 633).

## 6.5 Summary

The results of this exploratory study that examined how Egyptian freshman AUC students constructed and negotiated their national, religious and language identities reveal complex and unique trajectories. Individual participants showed complex, idiosyncratic patterns, particularly regarding the intricate relationships between religious, national, and linguistic identities. The students' social and academic backgrounds were certainly very important factors in their identity construction and negotiation. However, even though some participants shared relatively similar social and educational backgrounds or ranked their identities similarly, they each constructed and negotiated them differently because each has gone through unique individual experiences, has given different meanings to those experiences and identities, and has exercised their agency to select which available resources and identity agents to resort to.

Nonetheless, and at the risk of overgeneralizing, the following overarching identity construction and negotiation patterns have been noticed. All three identities under investigation in this study seemed to function in a similar manner. When an identity was ranked high on an individual's hierarchy of identities or when it was strongly related to another highly-ranked identity, this individual tended to perceive that the identity in question was under threat, which in turn seemed to make the identity more prominent and salient. For instance, participants with a very prominent and salient religious identity were the only ones who felt that their religious identity was challenged at AUC since

they were not able to verify that identity. This observed process of identity construction and negotiation is very much in line with Burke's (2009) cybernetic model that arranges identities hierarchically in a control system of identities whereby the identities at a higher level on the control system are general ones whose standards are related to ideals, beliefs, and values; whereas the lower level identities have goals that are more concrete and situated (Burke & Stets, 2009). Moreover, the outputs of higher-level identities "provide the standards for identities that are at lower levels in the control system" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 135).

Facing challenges while attempting to verify a highly ranked identity, or another identity that is important for its construction, led some participants to experience temporary feelings of crisis and shipwreck. The cybernetic model in Identity Theory explains how failure to verify an identity leads to an identity crisis; when two or more identities held by the same individual are activated (attempting to get verification) in a situation, the ones with a higher prominence or higher commitment get verified first. However, because these identities are held by only one person, the output is one. Thus, the individual's behaviour "must 'satisfy' several individual identities simultaneously by altering the situation in ways that change all of the self-relevant meanings perceived by all of the different identities" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.134). For all activated identities to be verified successfully, their meanings cannot be in opposition; they should either share the same meanings or be totally unrelated. When their standards' meanings are in opposition, the system faces an impossible situation in which one or more identity standards cannot be verified. In this case, the identity standards shift and individuals re-identify themselves to eradicate the conflict (Burke & Stets, 2009). The same process applies when the different

meanings are held by different individuals interacting together in a social setting; the meanings held by these individuals "cannot be in disagreement without serious problems resulting either in identities changing or in people leaving the situation" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 154). Data from the interviews showed several similar situations. One example from the interviews data are the students whose Egyptian-ness was questioned on linguistic grounds. These students modified their linguistic practices to position themselves as Egyptians; for instance, by using more ECA and less English to avert unwanted attention to their flawless English accent. They also redefined the strong link between language and national identities by showing approval towards the use of English in lieu of ECA in casual conversations if the motives of the speaker are not to intentionally position oneself away from Egyptian-ness, such as educational and economic motives. According to Burke's control model, the individual has agency as reflected in his/her behaviour that changes the situation in order to match the perceived situational meanings with the meanings held in the identity standard (Stryker & Burke 2000). The output behaviour "is the action of the person acting as an agent for the identity that has been activated" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 105). All "[i]dentities use the agency of persons to achieve and maintain the levels, flows, and transformations of actual and potential resources-that is, signs and symbols-in the situation to achieve the goals set in the identity standards" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 108).

AUC does provide several opportunities for students, who are willing to seize them, to construct these three identities; mainly through the extra-curricular activities and the liberal education curriculum. These opportunities, however, are not always sufficient and are not equally available for all three identities. Given the political circumstances, there were more opportunities

related to national identity than to the other two identities, linguistic (SA) and religious. More than one student reported the lack of a decently-spacious prayer area, which made praying on time inconvenient for some. On the other hand, despite the availability of SA courses, pressure to declare makes students drop/delay their initial intention to study Arabic.

Although exposure to liberal education can shock some students at first, they used critical thinking skills acquired through that very same education to enhance an identity that they thought was threatened or challenged by it. Participants in this study repeatedly stressed their agency; they explained that AUC offers several social and ideological choices but does not force anyone to abide by any given choice. They reported high peer pressure to conform to the liberal mainstream. Forthun et al. (2006) and Josselson (1992) argued that "one of the most important contexts for adolescent identity formation is relationships with peers. Relationships with peers provide adolescents a mirror for the self through the feedback and validation about their own behaviors and ways of thinking" (as cited in Sugimura & Shimizu, 2010, p.107). The participants, however, explained that no one directly "forces you to do or not do what you want to do" (Focus group), again stressing the role of agency in their identity construction and negotiation.

# Chapter VII: Conclusions and Recommendations

## 7.1 Conclusions

The current research attempted to answer the following research question: How do Egyptian freshman AUC students construct and negotiate their national, religious and linguistic identities? The results reveal a more complex picture than the widespread simplistic rhetoric about AUC's influence on its students' identity construction. The students' social and academic backgrounds seemed to determine the ranking of the three researched identities, national, religious and linguistic, on the participants' hierarchy of identities, which in turn shaped how they constructed and negotiated them.

Moreover, analysis of the collected data indicates that AUC did provide several opportunities for students willing to seize them to construct these three identities, thus emphasizing the role of agency in postmodern identity construction. Opportunities were available through the fairly-wide spectrum of extra-curricular activities and the liberal education offered at the university. These opportunities, however, were neither always sufficient, nor available for all three identities equally. For instance, because of the political environment following the 2011 Revolution, these opportunities were mainly related to national identity. On the other hand, liberal education that initially caused some participants to experience religious identity crisis and shipwreck provided those very same students with critical thinking skills that eventually enhanced their religious identity and made them more tolerant of diversity and alternative worldviews without necessarily adopting or agreeing with them.

Participants explained that AUC offers its students several social and ideological choices but does not force them to abide by any given choice.

When faced with situations of shipwreck, some participants used what Côté (1996) called "*identity capital"* and described as "the wherewithal individuals use when engaging in transactions as they attempt to negotiate the tricky passages created by the obstacles of late-modern society" (as cited in Lannegrand & Bosma, 2006, p. 109). They stressed their agency as they navigated the new AUC environment, particularly during their last interview at the end of their first year and the focus group at the beginning of their second year at AUC. They also resorted to other identity agents, namely family, students' clubs, and religious institutions. Several participants reframed those situations that caused them shipwreck by giving them new meanings and making strategic choices, for example refraining from participation in disconcerting discussions deemed intellectually unequal till educating themselves about the issue or made conscious decisions "to convey a linguistic identity while masking another depending on their desired self-representation" (Vasilopoulos, 2015, p. 63) by modifying their linguistic practices to position themselves as Egyptian.

## 7.2 Practical implications and recommendations

These findings have several implications for higher education (HE) stakeholders. I present them below in relation to each identity separately.

**7.2.1 Religious identity**. This study shows that at least a minority of AUC students, particularly those with both a prominent and salient religious identity, do struggle with their religious identity upon joining AUC. This must be understood in its politico historic context. At the time of conducting this study, religious identity was at the heart of the political scene in Egypt. The election of President Mohamed Morsi, prominent member of the Muslim Brotherhood,

triggered a wave of anti-religion feelings that manifested itself in the rise of the number of atheists and female Muslims taking off their hijab.

Because spirituality tends to raise deeper life questions for emerging adults, these struggles are connected to their well-being and their adjustment to adulthood (Bryant & Astin, 2008). Spiritual struggles appear to instigate several psychological problems for emerging adults, such "as depression, anxiety, negative mood, low self-esteem, and even suicidal thoughts" (Bryant & Astin, 2008, p. 4); some studies have even found a correlation between spiritual struggles and physical illness (Fitchett et al., 2004, as cited in Bryant & Astin, 2008, p. 4). It is, thus, necessary that HE stakeholders acknowledge and support students who face spiritual struggles. Otherwise, they might be left alone in their quest to understand fundamental questions (Bryant & Astin, 2008).

***Implications for HE management and administration**:* AUC, and other liberal HE institutions in the region, should be more equipped to support and facilitate freshman students' search for meanings during their transition into liberal education. Some of the programmes already in place at AUC do not seem to be enough. The First-Year Experience (FYE), for example, is a good attempt in terms of preparing new AUC students to what they can expect in terms of both academic and non-academic aspects of life at AUC, and in educating them about diversity. Yet, it takes place too soon during the students' first year. It is scheduled before students begin their classes, except the last session that takes place six weeks later, whereas the students need support throughout their first semester to help ease potential identity crises, especially for those who live away from their families upon joining university.

One concern raised by some students was that the geographical environment itself was not conductive to religious identity development for students who wanted to. In the following excerpt from the focus group, when asked what else could AUC add to help them construct their religious identities, three students expressed the need for more convenient prayer areas:

> *MAHMOUD: Courses are there, student clubs such as Help Club, Resala, Serenity are there. What could it add? A big mosque maybe?*
>
> *YASSIN: You have to go to the top of the building*
>
> *MAHMOUD: Or to the library where it is crowded and it's hot and you have to kneel down to*
>
> *ALIA: Maybe a proper place to pray like on campus where we don't have to walk all the way to somewhere to pray […] They could add a church as well […] The administration is like the government; it should provide everything to everyone.* (Focus group)

***Pedagogical implications****:* Faculty as well can play an important role in supporting students undergoing identity crises by creating opportunities for meaningful conversations and spiritual reflection (Stoppa, 2016, p. 22). However, when such opportunities are created, students do not necessarily use them. Several participants in my study abstained from engaging in class discussions that involved alternate worldviews because they perceived them as unequal debates with more knowledgeable teachers. A few students claimed that sometimes the whole class was unhappy during discussions that challenged some of their religious beliefs and caused them to struggle, but preferred to remain silent. Their claim is supported by previous research where college students "largely avoided discussing their struggles with others" which led the researchers to advise campuses "to consider ways they might 'normalize' the spiritual struggle phenomenon by communicating to students

that many people struggle in similar ways during college" (Rockenback, Walker, & Luzader, 2012, p. 72).

Students can still learn critical and scientific thinking skills without being subjected to a radical shock; they can be gradually and sensitively introduced to alternative worldviews that they might consider as taboo or offensive. They should also be allowed and encouraged to research and support their own worldviews, no matter how unscientific or irrational those worldviews might seem, without fear of being ridiculed or intimidated by more knowledgeable teachers. Maybe if they feel that their beliefs are respected, they would be more open to other worldviews and would not perceive them as a threat to their religious identity. In fact, when some participants' religious beliefs and practices were challenged by their teachers, and sometimes their university mates, they attempted to educate themselves in order to become better qualified to respond to those challenges. Their religious identity crisis was resolved and their religious identity was enhanced, in the process.

***Implications for students and their parents**:* Parents are crucial partners in religious identity construction. For students who lived away from their parents after joining university, being in constant touch with them through Skype seemed to help alleviate their religious identity crisis when they underwent one. It is, thus, advisable that parents and children maintain frequent contact after going to university, at least during their first year at university, particularly if the child lives away from home and is highly religious.

**7.2.2. Language identity.** When it comes to language identity, data indicates that students on the extreme ends of the English language proficiency continuum, on the upper end of SA and lower end of the ECA proficiency continua are the ones who struggle with their language identities; while those in

the middle do not experience language identity crises. Therefore, it is recommended that universities take some measures to support these students.

***Pedagogical implications***: Regarding English, students with poor English proficiency should be encouraged to participate in class since their lack of English fluency discourages them from doing so, and consequently affects their self-esteem as students. They should also be provided with English language resources beyond the time they spend at AUC's ELI, particularly help with improving their listening and speaking skills. This could be in the form of pronunciation and conversation workshops. In Spring 2017, the Writing Centre at the Rhetoric and Composition department piloted presentation skills tutoring besides its usual writing support, so perhaps a similar speaking and listening support initiative could be introduced at the ELI.

One of my previous AUC students, a LEAD scholarship student who was educated in SA in a public school before joining AUC, and who is now a PhD student in an English-Medium university in Europe, tagged me recently in a Facebook post in which she reflected on the challenges she faced with English at AUC. She recalled that she was about to reject AUC's scholarship during her first semester because her American teacher warned her that she was going to fail the English language course and was apparently comparing her to her classmates, graduates of English-medium schools. She also mentioned that it was my support and encouragement and my familiarity with writing problems faced by Arabic schools' students that helped improve her English writing. She wrote her Facebook post at the occasion of publishing a scientific article in English in a renowned journal. This anecdote is but one example of the serious obstacles faced by students, usually graduates of SA-Medium schools, with very low English proficiency that could jeopardize their whole academic future; it

is also an example of the role faculty awareness and compassion can play in facilitating these students' transition from SA to EMI education.

***Educational policy implications**:* Several recent studies in the Arab world called for a move towards bilingualism in higher education instead of the current English-language policy. In the introduction to their edited book *Global English and Arabic* that included studies from different Arab countries, Al-Issa and Dahan (2011) stated that "[t]he overall message from most of the chapters in this book is that there is greater need for a move towards bilingualism, rather than the continuing focus on English" (p. vii). Another study suggested "implementing a bilingual curriculum in which instruction is delivered in both English and Arabic" (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015, p. 20). They argued that their recommendation is

> in line with Samuelson and Freedman (2010) who argue that the use of English as the sole of [!] medium of instruction will not necessarily enable students to participate successfully in the global economy since many of them may not possess a good command of academic literacy in either their first language or English. (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015, p. 20)

Students should also be educated about the existence and legitimacy of English accents other than the American and British ones, and clarity of message must be stressed over native-like accent, for them to be less judgmental towards students with a low English speaking proficiency, and for the latter not to feel intimidated. Several studies have questioned the need for students to "conform to native-speaker norms of English, in an era when English is increasingly used in international contexts" (Timmis, 2002, as cited in Hopkyns, 2015, p. 31) "to communicate with other non-native speakers (NNSs)

rather than with native speakers (NSs)" (Bailey, 2006, as cited in Hopkyns, 2015, p. 31)

Furthermore, to help mitigate the feeling of inadequacy that some students with low English proficiency feel and to help other students maintain and/or enhance their SA proficiency, they should be encouraged to use SA sources alongside English ones for their assignments and research papers. Another suggestion is related to the Common Reading Program that was introduced in 2014 by Doris Jones, a Rhetoric and Composition colleague, which in her own words aims to "strengthen the academic community and create opportunities for intellectual engagement and in-depth learning through carefully selected common readings that pose multiple or differing perspectives and questions, followed by theme-oriented academic and cocurricular activities throughout the year" ("Common Reading Program", 2014). Students should be allowed to read the assigned book for this programme either in SA or in English if a translation is available or if the book is originally in SA as was the case for Ahmed Tewfik's short story *Utopia.* They should also be allowed to participate in the related essay contest in SA or in English since some freshman students have excellent ideas but would not otherwise share them with the larger AUC community due to their low English proficiency.

***Implications for policy makers**:* On a larger scale, EMI policy has become necessary for economic development, but this should not be at the expense of the students' first language (Troudi, 2009, p. 210) or what is supposedly their first language; arguably SA is unfortunately no longer the first language for a lot of children in several Arab countries, particularly among the upper class. English as a global language is also ubiquitous in their daily lives; it is the number one language when it comes to using the Internet and mass

media. All the interviewees showed a preference for English movies, series and songs regardless of their English proficiency. Besides,

> the link suggested by Bourdieu (1986) that should exist between the upper class and the official language does not seem to hold in the Arabic-speaking Middle East. The upper class often adopts foreign languages, while proficiency in MSA [Modern Standard Arabic] is not seen as a sign of high social status; consequently, there are two educational systems: a private one in which MSA's role is under-estimated, and a public one in which MSA is an integral part. (Mellor, 2015, p. 119)

Thus, educational policies in Egypt and other Arab countries should develop SA curricula and teaching methods to make them more effective and appealing to the 21st Century students to become on a par with the international curricula taught at private foreign schools. As Badry (2011) recommended, "For Arabic to remain part of the identity of young and future generations in the UAE (and elsewhere in the Arab world), the same efforts exerted in teaching English must be brought to bear in improving the teaching of Arabic" (as cited in Hopkyns, 2015, p. 30).

Al-Issa and Dahan (2011) warn against "signs of a possible future loss of MSA" (p. xi) and against the possibility that Arab youth view MSA

> as something old-fashioned which does not merit their attention because, after all, what they are taught and continually reminded of, by everything and everyone surrounding them, is that English is the global language. English is the language of technology, business, medicine, and education – therefore it must be more important than Arabic because it does so much more for them than Arabic ever has the opportunity to. (p. 14)

Therefore, there is an urgent need to take measures that counter this potential loss of MSA. Positive attitudes towards the language must be reinforced at home, in the media, and in educational institutions.

> Firstly, the contrasting ways English and Arabic are currently viewed need to be challenged if Arabic is to stay important and dynamic for generations to come. There need to be just as many incentives to speak Arabic as there are for English. Having clear role models such as leaders and actors using a high standard of Arabic and choosing to do so over using English could, for example, be effective. (Hopkyns, 2015, pp. 29-30)

Choi (2014) gave the example of Tornedalen Finnish that has been revived as a result of conscious "revival movement along with the establishment of the Swedish Tornedalians' Association and by using Tornedalen Finnish in various areas such as music, literature, and children's books and local radio" (p. 142).

**7.2.3. National identity.** National identity was the least problematic identity for the majority of participants. Most of them constructed it very discretely, except one student, Heba, who additionally seemed to be still at the exploratory stage of the three identities, and except those few students who had lived abroad either part or all of their lives and whose national identity was questioned because of their EA and English proficiencies. When asked during the focus group "What should AUC add to make you live your national identity fully?", the participants did not make any suggestions except Aya who suggested, perhaps jokingly, "for example, at the beginning of a session, teachers can say 'this is Egypt' (giggles)" (Aya/ Focus group), but was cut short by Mahmoud who told her "*I'm sorry. You came to AUC knowing that this is an American institution; I'm sorry. It should not add anything*". And Alia who said

"*mafeesh h'ad momken yea'mel h'aga fel national identity*" [No one can do anything to your national identity] [Translation mine].

***Implications for policy makers**:* Possible suggestions related to national identity could be to create cultural programmes, similar to those already in place for international students, for Egyptian students who have spent most of their lives abroad in order to support them in their quest for meanings related to their national identity by providing them with the cultural exposure they expect to find by moving to study in Egypt. These may include cultural trips to different Egyptian regions and encouraging them to attend the numerous public lectures about social, economic, political, and cultural issues related to Egypt. Hardly does a week pass by without at least one such event taking place at AUC, but only a few students attend them. Most importantly, international schools should give more space to Egyptian history and culture.

***Wider implications**:* The findings of my study have implications not only for students in Middle-Eastern liberal education universities but also for all sorts of global migrants, be they voluntary or forced. American and European universities that admit Arab and Muslim students who may experience national, religious, and language identity crises as a result of living in a different culture and learning a different language. This study can also give insight into the challenges faced by the thousands of refugees who fled to Europe from their war-stricken countries.

European educators are very much concerned with the issue of refugees that they suddenly found themselves faced with and were unprepared for. When attending *ECER 2016* (*The European Conference on Educational Research*) at University College Dublin in Ireland, I was amazed by the large

number of research and talks that revolved around refugees' education. I contemplated that if there was more effective cooperation and communication between educational researchers and policy makers in the Middle East and Europe, the former can help their European fellows understand a lot of learning and identity-related issues that the refugees face, and save them valuable time that would otherwise be wasted on attempting to understand those issues. I, hence, hope that my study is a small step towards such conversation.

### 7.3 Limitations

One of the limitations I faced when conducting this research was not making the best use of the survey. I used it for the sole purposes of exploring the field of study and recruiting participants for the interview. However, I failed to recruit participants through the survey for reasons explained in the methodology chapter. Moreover, the way I phrased some of the survey items reflected limited understanding of identity research at that point. I have later become very sceptical about the ability of my survey questions to measure what they claimed to measure, and about the use of quantitative methods to measure and understand identity construction and negotiation in depth. For instance, I did not ask the survey participants to rank their national, religious, and language identities; instead I used several questions that asked them to state their degree of agreeing with Likert Scale statements like "When I hear the call to prayer/church bells I feel great". Such statements could measure their religious identity prominence (ideal self) but not its salience (situational self). Hence, my decision not to use the results of the survey to answer my research question, and to limit its use to getting a very general idea about the cohort I recruited my interview and focus group participants from. Had it been properly designed, the survey could have been an additional lens to help understand the research

context by giving insight into the participants' university peers' practices and attitudes related to their national, religious, and linguistic identities. To avoid the survey pitfalls, future researchers could design a survey that measures both identity salience and prominence, or else they can use previously-tested questionnaires instead of trialling with a new one.

Another limitation is related to the immediacy of the participants' experiences as opposed to identity construction being a slow and continuous process. The participants did not have enough time to step back and reflect deeply on the meanings of their AUC experiences and their implications to their identity construction, as the data was collected over three semesters only. It would have been interesting to follow up these participants throughout their undergraduate years or to interview them at the end of their final year.

Last, recruiting a larger and more varied sample of students that includes more Christians, some atheists, and graduates of other educational systems, would have made the results more generalizable. Furthermore, as I stayed in touch with three of the participants, Aya, Mahmoud and Yassin, until this very moment via social media, I came to follow their newsfeed and to witness their ambitious nature; all of them have joined universities in Europe and North America and are still involved in extra-curricular activities including outstanding community service, an internship in the European parliament, and a successful online vlog with thousands of followers. These three students are therefore not representative of "regular" AUC students. I am wondering if other students such as Heba and Marina who displayed signs of excellence as students in my classes, are also exceptional students.

## 7.4 Suggestions for future research

There are a few areas that can be further researched. First, more research on the role of siblings, teachers, and students' clubs as identity agents is needed. Second, it would be interesting to investigate gender differences in identity construction reported in previous research (Lannegrand & Bosma, 2006, p. 108). Third, future research can examine if identity construction varies among students in different majors as students' exposure to secular theories and philosophies, for instance, can vary across different disciplines (Reimer, 2010, p. 403). It would also be interesting to study the identity construction of graduates of international schools who join public universities and who face a cultural shock upon joining those HE institutions that usually teach in SA and where the social environment is very conservative and the margin of freedom of expression is a lot narrower compared to their schools and to AUC.

Another interesting area worthy of future research, that is beyond the scope of the present study, is investigating the participants' very act of code-switching and mixing of English, ECA and SA during the interviews and focus group as an additional lens through which their linguistic and even their national and religious identities could be examined.

## 7.5 Final conclusions

The study of identity formation is now more important than ever. Globalization has led to some undesirable consequences that "are manifest in increasing rootlessness and loss of stability". When individuals experience feelings of vulnerability and "existential anxiety" they tend to seek refuge in "[a]ny collective identity that can provide such security" (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 743). Two collective identities "that are more likely than other identity constructions to provide answers to those in need" are nationalism and religion "because of their

ability to convey a picture of security, stability, and simple answers. They do this by being portrayed as resting on solid ground, as being true, thus creating a sense that the world really is what it appears to be" (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 742). A simple look at major political crises around the world, at the rise of the so-called Islamic terrorism and far-right extremism in Europe and the United States reveals that they are usually fueled by questions of identity and feelings of insecurity due to perceived threats to one identity or the other, particularly national and religious identities. Thus, the urgent need to understand identity construction and negotiation and to help individuals embrace their multiple identity components while also being open to others who hold different identities. Two decades ago, In his book *Les Identités Meurtrières* [Killer Identities], a more accurate title than the English translation *On Identity*, Maalouf (2000) advocated a global identity and warned that

> If our contemporaries are not encouraged to accept their multiple affiliations and allegiances; if they cannot reconcile their need for identity with an open and unprejudiced tolerance of other cultures; if they feel they have to choose between denial of the self and denial of the other- then we shall be bringing into being legions of the lost and hordes of bloodthirsty madmen. (p. 30)

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Consent Forms

### Focus Group Consent Form

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the research project as a whole and of the focus group.

I understand that:

- there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me
- any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications
- If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form
- all information I give will be treated as confidential
- the researcher will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

.....…… .....

(Signature of participant) (Date)

…….

(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact the researcher:
Name: Sanaa Khabbar
Contact phone number: 012XXXXXXXX
Email: skhabbar@aucegypt.edu

**Interview Consent Form**

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

- there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me
- Any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications
- All information I give will be treated as confidential
- The researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher.

Email of researcher: skhabbar@aucegypt.edu

**Name of Participant** **Signature of Participant** **Date**

_____ _____ _____

Kindly write your email address if you do not mind to be contacted by the researcher.

Email address:

_____

**Survey Consent Form**

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

- there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me
- Any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications
- All information I give will be treated as confidential
- The researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher.

Email of researcher: skhabbar@aucegypt.edu

**Name of Participant** **Signature of Participant** **Date**

_____ _____ _____

Kindly write your email address if you do not mind to be contacted by the researcher.

Email address:

_____

## Appendix B: Data Collection Instruments
## Interview Topic Guide
## Example 1 (First round of interviews)

These questions are just guidelines that will lead to new questions during the interview. I may or may not follow this order, and may or may not ask all of these questions depending on how the interview goes.

1. Why did you choose to join AUC?
2. How do you feel the transition from school to university has been so far?
3. Are you still treated in the same way by your acquaintances after joining the university?
4. How are students from AUC generally viewed by non-Aucians? How do you feel about that? Can you share with me some stories to illustrate?
5. Who are you?
    - Where are you from?
    - Tell me about your family
6. How has attending the university affected who you are?
7. What challenges are you facing at the university?
8. What does being religious mean to you?
9. Do you consider yourself to be religious?
10. Has attending the university affected your religiosity?
11. What does being an Egyptian mean to you?
12. Has attending the university affected your nationalistic feelings?
13. How has attending the university affected your linguistic practices?
14. Have you joined any of the students' social groups on campus?
15. Do you think that that your experiences at AUC have enhanced your nationalistic feelings/decreased them/didn't affect them?
16. How do you primarily identify yourself? (Rate from 1 to 3): Arab; Egyptian; Muslim/Christian

**Example 2 (Mahmoud's second interview)**

**General questions:**

- How are your studies going?
- How was the first semester?
- Medical school?
- Did you go the US?
- Did you make more friends at AUC? Outside AUC? Do you still think the people at AUC are friendly?
- You were not interested in the AUC life; you said you didn't care. Is it still the case?
- Have you joined any students' clubs? Participated in any AUC events? What have you learned from them? How have they affected who you are?
- You were a big fan of the core curriculum.
- Do you think you have changed in any way since you joined the AUC?

**National identity:**

- Has the AUC experience helped you experience Egyptian culture? (Elaborate/state examples)
- What is the influence of AUC (teachers, curriculum, student life) on your national identity? Are you happy or unhappy about this influence or lack thereof? (Elaborate)
- What do you think of the recent conspiracy accusations against AUC and AUCians? How did you feel about them?

**Religious identity:**

- How did you deal with the challenge of maintaining your religious identity?
- What is the impact of AUC on your religious practices and beliefs, if any?
- What is the influence of AUC (teachers, curriculum, student life) on your religious identity? Are you happy or unhappy about this influence or lack thereof? (Elaborate)
- Have you taken the Arabic Islamic course?

**Linguistic identity:**

- Have your linguistic practices changed in any way compared to when you first joined AUC?
- Which language do you usually use with your AUC friends?
- Are you still learning Arabic?
- What books, if any, did you read since last interview? In which language?
- What media do you watch? TV? Internet? Cinema? Which language? Has this been the case back home? (I didn't ask him this question in the first interview).

**Example 3 (Mahmoud's last interview)**

- Elections
- **National identity** & AUC
    - Clubs/Resala, problem-solving
    - Courses
    - Teachers
- **Religious identity**
    - Practices
    - Why didn't you interrupt the teacher to discuss evolution but you did discuss pre-determined vs. free-choice?
- **Linguistic identity**
    - Linguistic practices
    - Feelings and attitudes towards colloquial Arabic and English and standard Arabic
    - Which language do you feel more emotionally attached to?
- Hierarchy of identities?

**********

- Could you reflect on the changes related to your national, religious, and linguistic identities as an AUC student throughout this whole academic year?
- What is your national/religious/Linguistic identity? Are you able to fully express it and construct it at AUC? Why not? What did you do about it?
- Does it provide opportunities for identity construction?
- Does AUC constrain religious/national/linguistic identity construction for students like you? Are you being pushed to be either more religious or less religious than you wish to be?
- Why do some courses like the Philosophical thinking have a strong effect on some students?

**********

**Questions to verify my analysis:**

- One way I've been thinking about your religious identity is that it is the driving force in your life, and that AUC has challenged it at the beginning (shaking hands, guys cursing, peer pressure) but still didn't influence it

much (not interested in socializing/friends who are similar-minded) eventually it has been enhanced and you were able to negotiate it (clubs, lectures, readings, Islamic courses/avoiding girls, learning Arabic/Quran outside AUC/Super Muslims), but I'm not sure.

- One way I've been thinking about whether studying at the AUC has had an impact on your national identity is that AUC reiterated the point of "it's good to be American and to speak English", and has enhanced your Egyptian identity (I'm proud of helping Egyptians through community service/elections/revolution). but I'm not sure about this, what do you think?
- You're not a very patriotic person, you associate being American with open-mindedness, education but you feel more like an Egyptian and you associate that with religion (Egypt was mentioned in Quran/America doesn't have religion).
- One way I've been thinking about your linguistic identity is that religion is the main reason behind your learning Arabic// You can speak both with ease?
- You're using more English here than in school/ but I'm not sure about this. What do you think?

**********

**Questions about their experience as participants:**

- What did you like about participating in this study?
- What didn't you like about it?
- Was this opportunity to discuss your identity and your AUC experiences beneficial for your identity construction?
- Did it enhance your understanding of yourself?

**********

- Would you be interested to participate in a focus group discussion of my major findings in the Fall semester?

## Focus Group Questions

(Each of the following statements/questions was typed on flashcard preceded by "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?" and the students discussed them one by one in the following order)

**National identity**

5. It is hard to be a "real" Egyptian at AUC
6. There are enough opportunities at AUC that nurture the students' national identity
7. Being an AUC student helps build an Egyptian citizen proud of his/her country and culture
8. A student's background determines how the AUC experience affects his/her national identity construction.

**Religious identity**

5. It is hard to be a good Muslim/Christian at AUC
6. Being an AUC student helps build a Muslim/Christian proud of his religion
7. There are enough opportunities at AUC that nurture my religious identity development
8. A student's background determines how the AUC experience affects his/her religious identity construction.

**Linguistic identity**

5 There are enough opportunities at AUC that nurture the students' linguistic identities.
6 Being an AUC student helps build a person proud of the Arabic language.
7 It is hard for AUC students to preserve their linguistic identities (Be it related to English, Arabic, or another language).
8 A student's background determines how the AUC experience affects his/her linguistic identity construction.
9 Generally speaking, AUC students use more English than Arabic.

**Other:**

4. What should AUC add to make you able to live your linguistic identity fully?
5. What should AUC add to make you able to live your religious identity fully?
6. What should AUC add to make you able to live your national identity fully?

## Appendix C: Ethical Approval Forms

*STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH*

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

Graduate School of Education

# Certificate of ethical research approval

**STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS**
**You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).**

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines/ and view the School's statement on the GSE student access on-line documents.

**READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER** (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). **DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

**Your name:** Sanaa Khabbar

**Your student no:** 600040237

**Return address for this certificate:** sk357@exeter.ac.uk

**Degree/Programme of Study:** PhD in Education

**Project Supervisor(s):** Prof. Sarah Rich

**Your email address:** sk357@exeter.ac.uk

**Tel:** (+20)123296950

**I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.**

**I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.**

**Signed:** Sanaa Khabbar **date:** 30/05/11

*NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must not be included in your work. It can be kept for your records.*

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: July 2010

# Certificate of ethical research approval

**Your student no:** 600040237

---

**Title of your project:** Foreign higher education and Egyptian students' identity construction.

**Brief description of your research project:**

This study seeks to understand how the Egyptian students negotiate and construct their identities in the context of foreign higher education institutions in Egypt.

**Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):**

The participants will be 100 first-year students from each of the American University in Cairo (AUC) and the German University in Cairo (GUC). Their ages will range between 17 and 18 years.

A smaller number, 10 first-year volunteer students from each university, will be interviewed at 3 different time points of their first year at the university: the very beginning, mid-point, and the end of the year. These 10 students will also keep either a private online journal or an audio-recorded one (Based on their preferences).

**Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:**

a) **informed consent: Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents). An example of the consent form(s) must accompany this document.** a blank consent form can be downloaded from the GSE student access on-line documents.

The researcher will 1) ask the participants to sign a consent form that explains the aims of the research as well as the ways in which data will be collected and the purposes for which it will be used, and 2) will get their consent both for collecting data and for using and sharing it.

b) anonymity and confidentiality

Participants will be informed that participation is voluntary and strictly confidential. They are free not to participate and to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences for them.

Questionnaires will be anonymous, whereas interviews and journals will be confidential. Respondents will be informed that their interview and journal responses are confidential rather than anonymous. Their responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Respondents' names will be replaced with identification numbers immediately after data collection, and a master identification file will be kept by the researcher in a locked cabinet in her office to allow for completion of missing or unclear data.

When results are shared, participants' real names will be replaced by pseudonyms and any information that may make a participant's identity recognizable will not be published.

---

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: July 2010

**Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:**

Data will be collected through 1) a questionnaire at the beginning of the 2011-2012 academic year, 2) 3 audio-taped interviews, and 3) either audio-recorded journal entries or online ones.

There is no known harm or expected stress to be associated with participating in this research. To ensure this, the instruments have been reviewed several times by the researcher and her PhD supervisors, and will be piloted for any potentially harmful effects. The researcher will conduct interviews and ask for journal entries at times that are suitable for each interviewee, and will do her best to make him/her at ease.

**Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):**

After data is collected, questionnaires, recorded interviews, and journal entries will be kept in a locked closet in the researcher's office. Transcribed recordings will be sent to participants for accuracy verification; results will also be shared with participants.

If any of the participants is disabled, arrangements will be made to accommodate for his/her needs depending on the type of disability s/he has.

**Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):**

There are no known harmful consequences of the study on participants.

---

*This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.*

*N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor*

---

**This project has been approved for the period:** Sept. 2011 **until:** June 2012

**By** (above mentioned supervisor's signature) S Rich **date:** 12/7/11

*N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.*

---

**GSE unique approval reference:** D/10/11/76

**Signed:** Salah Troudi **date:** 15/7/2011
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from http://education.exeter.ac.uk/research/

---

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: July 2010

*STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH*
DISSERTATION/THESIS

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

Graduate School of Education

# Certificate of ethical research approval

## DISSERTATION/THESIS

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications and view the School's Policy online.

**READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER** (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). **DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

**Your name:** Sanaa Khabbar

**Your student no:** 600040237

**Return address for this certificate:** sk357@exeter.ac.uk

**Degree/Programme of Study:** PhD in Education

**Project Supervisor(s):** Prof. Sarah Rich & Prof. Salah Troudi

**Your email address:** sk357@exeter.ac.uk

**Tel:** (+20) 1223296950

**I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my dissertation / thesis** (delete whichever is inappropriate) **to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.**

**I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.**

**Signed:...** Sanaa Khabbar **.....date:...**01/09/12**.....**

*NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must* ***not be included*** *in your work. It can be kept for your records.*

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: April 2012

# Certificate of ethical research approval
## DISSERTATION/THESIS

Your student no: 600040237

---

Title of your project: Foreign higher education and Egyptian students' identity construction

Brief description of your research project: This study seeks to understand how the Egyptian students negotiate and construct their identities in the context of foreign higher education institutions in Egypt; namely the American University in Cairo (AUC).

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

10 second-year AUC students aged 18-20, whom I have already interviewed in the previous academic year.

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:

a) informed consent: Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents). Copy(ies) of your consent form(s) you will be using must accompany this document. a blank consent form can be downloaded from the GSE student access on-line documents:

I will 1) ask the participants to sign a consent form that explains the aims of the research as well as the ways in which data will be collected and the purposes for which it will be used, and 2) will get their consent both for collecting data and for using and sharing it.

b) anonymity and confidentiality

Participants will be informed that participation is voluntary and strictly confidential. They are free not to participate and to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences for them.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

The participants will be divided into two focus groups of 5.

There is no known harm or expected stress to be associated with participating in these focus groups. To ensure this, the list of topic guides will be reviewed several times and approved by my PhD supervisors, and will be piloted for any potentially harmful effects. I will schedule the focus groups at a time that is suitable for all participants.

---

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: April 2012

**Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):**

**After data is collected, audio-taped discussions from the focus groups will be kept in a locked closet in my office. Transcribed recordings will be sent to participants for accuracy verification; results will also be shared with participants. Each participant will be sent a copy of the transcript that shows his/her name but does not show the names of other participants; these will be removed and replaced by numbers.**

**None of the participants has any special needs.**

**Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):**

**There are no known harmful consequences of the study on participants.**

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***This form should now be printed out**, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.*

*N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor*

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**This project has been approved for the period: September 2012 until: December 2012**

**By** (above mentioned supervisor's signature): Sarah Rich **Date: 29th Sept 2012...**

*N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.*

---

**GSE unique approval reference:** D/11/12/6.7

**Signed:** ..... **date:** 8/10/12.
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

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**2012-2013, case #22**

**THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO**
**OFFICE OF THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)**

**To:** Sanaa Khabbar

**cc:** Jess Barrett

**From:** Atta Gebril, Chair of the IRB

**Date:** November 5, 2012

**Re:** approval of study

---

This is to inform you that I reviewed your revised research proposal entitled "**Foreign higher education and Egyptian students' identity construction**," and determined that it required consultation with the IRB under the "expedited" heading. As you are aware, the members of the IRB suggested certain revisions to the original proposal, but your new version addresses these concerns successfully. The revised proposal used appropriate procedures to minimize risks to human subjects and that adequate provision was made for confidentiality and data anonymity of participants in any published record. I believe you will also make adequate provision for obtaining informed consent of the participants.

Please note that IRB approval does not automatically ensure approval by CAPMAS, an Egyptian government agency responsible for approving much off-campus research involving surveys and interviews. CAPMAS issues are handled at AUC by the office of the University Counsellor, Dr. Amr Salama. The IRB is not in a position to offer any opinion on CAPMAS issues, and takes no responsibility for obtaining CAPMAS approval

Thank you and good luck.

Atta Gebril

Atta egebril

IRB chair, The American University in Cairo
2046 HUSS Building
T: 02-26151919
Email: agebril@aucegypt.edu

## Appendix D: Emails sent to Participants

### Sample email sent to my own students to solicit participation in the study

Dear Heba,

I'd like to thank you for having taken the time to fill in my questionnaire last class. The survey is part of a PhD study about the relationship between freshmen students' experiences at the university and their identity construction. As a follow-up to that survey, I'm conducting 3 interviews with a number of students. One interview at the beginning of the academic year, the second is half-way through it, and the last one is at the end of the year. The interview isn't a formal one but rather a friendly conversation to be conducted at a time suitable for each interviewee.

I'd be grateful if you could meet me for an interview. Please note that participation is voluntary and confidential and that you can withdraw at any time from the study with no negative consequences on you as a student.

Best wishes,
Sanaa Khabbar

### Sample email sent to my students to solicit their participation in the pilot focus group

Dear Maram,

I'm conducting a research about how AUC students construct their national, religious, and linguistic identities at the AUC. I'm almost done with this study, but I still need to conduct a focus group (a one hour discussion) with the participants in the coming 2 weeks. Before I do so, I have to pilot the focus group with another group of students who are not part of the study. I therefore would be grateful if you could participate in this pilot group. Please note that participation is voluntary and confidential.

Best,
Sanaa Khabbar

**Sample Email sent to participants in the focus group**
Dear Alia,

I hope you're doing well. Finally, I'm ready for the focus group I told you about during our last interview. It's approximately a one-hour discussion with 4 or 5 other participants from the study. You will discuss general questions related to your AUC experiences.

If you're still willing to participate, the focus group will take place at the beginning of the week (25-29 November).

Your continuous interest is highly appreciated.

Best,
Sanaa

## Appendix E: List of Themes

A sample of how I derived and refined themes related to religious identity construction and negotiation

List A:

- Religion as private
- Religion as interaction with others
- Fear of becoming less religious
- Scientific Thinking & Philosophical Thinking courses incompatible with religious beliefs
- Teachers (Atheist/gay/shares wrong info about Islam)
- AUC environment/transition (Shock at PDA/girls smoking/unwanted touch behavior across genders)
- Reactions to threat/negotiation
- Other students changed/LEAD students
- Being away from family (Limited support)
- Doubling religious rituals (Praying/fasting/reading Quran/ Going to church/Bible study group)
- AUC cannot affect one's religiosity
- Religion is the main thing

List B:

- Salience:
    - Religion as private
    - Religion as interaction with others
    - Religion is the main force drive
- No perceived threat/AUC cannot affect one's religiosity
- Threat/Fear of becoming less religious
    - Other students changed/LEAD students
    - Being away from family (Limited support)
    - AUC environment/transition (Shock at PDA/girls smoking/unwanted touch behavior across genders)
    - Courses and teachers
    - Scientific Thinking & Philosophical Thinking courses incompatible with religious beliefs
    - Teachers (Atheist/gay/shares wrong info about Islam)
- Reactions to threat/negotiation
    - Doubling religious rituals (Praying/fasting/reading Quran/ Going to church)
    - Students' clubs (Bible study group/Help club)

List C:

- Salience& hierarchy determine crisis occurrence:
    - Religion as private
    - Religion as interaction with others

    - Religion is the main force drive
- Previous exposure as mediating factor
- Identity Crisis:
    - No identity crisis/perceived threat/AUC cannot affect one's religiosity
    - Threat/Fear of becoming less religious/confusion & frustration
        - Other students changed/LEAD students
        - Being away from family (Limited support)
        - AUC environment/transition (Shock at PDA/girls smoking/unwanted touch behavior across genders)
        - Courses and teachers (Alternate worldviews)
            - Scientific Thinking & Philosophical Thinking courses incompatible with religious beliefs
            - Teachers (Atheist/gay/shares wrong info about Islam)
- Crisis resolution & identity enhancement
    - Doubling religious rituals (Praying/fasting/reading Quran/ Going to church)
    - Realizing power of agency
    - Safe havens (Students' clubs/church)
    - Remaining silent & educating oneself
    - Reaching compromise between different worldviews

## Appendix F: Data Coding Sample

### Sample 1: Negotiation strategies of religious identity

Internals\\Interviews\\Wave1\\Yassin - § 4 references coded [ 14.12% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.87% Coverage

YASSIN: Definitely, definitely. I mean it gets really awkward when, when, when a girl, you know holds up her hand and you say sorry I don't shake. Sometimes you know there are 3 situations which occur. One, Ok it's cool and she laughs; that's thumbs up. One is fine and no positive, no negative. Negative is when she says why? Or please don't embarrass me, or it gets really awkward really awkward I mean come on please, uum so I'm afraid that I might be getting lenient, um, you know, people doing something, when, when, when you see a lot of people doing something, it's just human nature that you wanna be like them; it's not me or anyone else, it's just you wanna be like them; it's hard to be unique.
SANAA: You don't want to be like an outcast.
YASSIN: Yeah, the odd ball out, the ugly duck.
SANAA: uh.
YASSIN: um but I'm gonna stick to it inshaallah and um whenever I feel weak you know I'm just gonna probably ask my dad to help me out or something. Yeah just to give me advice. When I do feel that I'm, you know, going down on my religious level…
SANAA: What else is challenging so far?
YASSIN: At AUC?
SANAA: Yeah.
YASSIN: Religious?
SANAA: Yes.
YASSIN: In religion terms? Girls, girls, probably like number one, girls. I mean Islam (sigh), Islam, in Islam a girl and a guy contact should be limited. Girls over here do five things; if they're not talking, they're laughing; if they're not laughing, they're giggling; if they're not giggling, they're flirting; and if they're not flirting, they go back to talking. So those are the five things that girls always constantly do. And when you try to, you know, I mean I'm cool with talking with them but only if it's absolutely necessary, not just to spend idle time. You get what I mean? um so I mean in terms of you know cigarettes and all that stuff, I'm out of it, I'm, I mean I run a lot and I exercise a lot and I do work outs and stuff, so it's, that's totally farfetched. Girls I mean you just, you're forced to interact with them. They're always in your classes and in your rests and they're everywhere (laughter).So, but I mean I'm managing, I mean I'm not just totally isolated from them, but at the same time I just keep it limited, you know. Um, I mean.
SANAA: It's hard so far to put the limits?
YASSIN: It sometimes gets beyond the limit, and sometimes goes back; it just keeps fluctuating, so I mean I'm trying to keep it below the limit but it just has to fluctuate every now and then. It's just what happens.

Reference 2 - 3.59% Coverage

SANAA: Do any of these courses or any courses you're taking um challenge your religious identity or again could affect it in any way?
YASSIN: uuh Scientific Thinking, I love the subject, I love the fact that they teach you how to think like a scientist. It's cool and everything, but when you're going to evolution, they start teaching you that uh people evolved from a single organism and concepts that go against your religion. You're studying I mean when you're studying you just study it for the sake of studying that; you're not, I mean definitely I mean definitely I was definitely not a monkey, I could swear to it. But (laughter) but uuh yeah but uuuh I mean we just study it for the sake of studying it. And, and they do have concepts where creationism and all that stuff is refutable and [unintelligible] stuff like that, I mean without religion who are we? Nothing can just happen; there has to be a major power. That's my [ doesn't help me a lot[unintelligible parts].
SANAA: Your teacher, you mean?
YASSIN: I mean he isn't talking about it at all. He doesn't take into consideration the fact that there are some Muslims in the audience itself, so he, he talks against creationism as not as lord kind of theories but as an applicable theory to you know to stuff that happens in

the universe.
SANAA: Do you discuss that in class, or do you just…?
YASSIN: No I just uh, I mean he doesn't go around it I think a bit too much cause I guess he knows why, but he, he, when, when, when it comes to humans and apes I always like to pick up a fight, I just love fights (laughter). So I start telling him that we can't be descending from monkeys and monkeys are totally different. We hold on this raged debate. So yeah, but I mean it's friendly and stuff but . . .
SANAA: And you discuss it from a religious point of view or a factual scientific point of view?
YASSIN: uuh both, both, yeah both.
SANAA: Both, OK.
YASSIN: Both, but of course it's scientific thinking, so Mr. ???? tends to go for the scientific bit and leaves the religion out of it. Yeah but I mean it's going well; I mean we're taking physics next so and I'm addicted to physics, so that will be cool. I mean hopefully there are no apes in physics, hopefully, hopefully.
SANAA: (laughter)
YASSIN: I'm just crossing my fingers.

Internals\\Interviews\\Wave1\\Aya - § 1 reference coded [ 5.88% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 5.88% Coverage

AYA: For me , when I deal with boys , I don't cross specific limits , I don't accept that. I have established limits, yet I am the helpful type, if one of the boys needs my help, I will be there for him. As for girls, it's common here that they loosen up and call one another bad names, I don't accept that, I don't utter bad words at all. They have respected me for that.
SANAA: They knew their limits.
AYA: Yes , and they take me for a respectable girl. A boy once asked me if I was form Cairo and wondered why I acted this way. Another one said I was stuck-up , I got angry , but I knew I was right because I can't disobey God to make people happy with me.
SANAA: Why did he say you were stuck-up?
AYA: He wanted me to loosen up with him, he tried to touch me with his hand.
SANAA: Put his hand on your shoulders?
AYA: Tried to touch my hand, called me "baby", it was unacceptable.
SANAA: It wasn't right.
AYA: It's the way they deal with one another here. He didn't mean I was his baby, but I told him he should speak in a proper way with me because it's the way I wanted it to be. I knew they'd hate me for that, but I didn't want God to be angry with me. When you follow God's orders, He will make others happy with you. After 3 or 4 months, everyone loved me and became friend with me. We write essays about ourselves, my teacher told me I should tell mom I was a well-mannered girl. I was so happy really.

Reference 4 - 1.06% Coverage

SANAA: Yeah, OK. Is maintaining your religious identity at AUC still challenging? You told me it was kind of challenging compared to, to
MAHMOUD: It was challenging, yes.
SANAA: to Cairo University.
MAHMOUD: Definitely.
SANAA: Is it still challenging?
MAHMOUD: Not as much as last semester because last semester I was exposed to that but not as much.
SANAA: So what strategies did you do to
MAHMOUD: Strategies?(laughter)
SANAA: negotiate your religious identity?
MAHMOUD: (laughter) strategies.
SANAA: How did you deal with that?
MAHMOUD: I like that word.
SANAA: [unintelligible]
MAHMOUD: Actually it is a strategy, and uh
SANAA: I don't want to put words on your mouth.

Reference 5 - 2.44% Coverage

MAHMOUD: No, actually it is very interesting, how you word it up. Uh strategies, OK. strategy number one uh I try to limit my time with uh I mean a lot of my female friends, my female classmates; they tend to uh hang out with me after class and I've got stuff to do, I just try to you know cut it short. If you need something, ahlanwasahlan, but just you wanna chat, you wanna get a bagel, you wanna eat, fine I don't mind doing it but not like every single time, so I try to limit that.
SANAA: OK.
MAHMOUD: uh, the handshake thing, uh that I avoid by a technique I do. Would you care for uh to [unintelligible] it?
SANAA: Yes, of course. Tell me (laughter)
MAHMOUD: When I like I'd see someone, I'd see someone, you know, coming towards me and I know they're gonna say hi to me, I just do like hey! (waved) (laughter). It's just as simple as that.
SANAA: (laughter) Yeah.
MAHMOUD: But sometimes they, they'd come up to you and they'd like hey and I'm like Ok I'm fine, I don't mind doing it.
SANAA: But you do it?
MAHMOUD: I do it.
SANAA: Sometimes when you're really
MAHMOUD: I mean I'm not gonna tell them, I'm sorry I don't shake hands with a woman, but if it's someone I see every single class and every time she does that, I would tell her. But as opposed to girls I see every month or every two weeks, I'm not gonna.
SANAA: Ok.
MAHMOUD: What other strategies? Oh!
SANAA: So I was right in using the word "strategies" (laughter).
MAHMOUD: Yes, yes, very, very, I really think the word is very interesting. uh what other strategies? What other strategies? Hem I think those are the two main ones.

Reference 6 - 1.93% Coverage

MAHMOUD: Yes, yes, the biggest challenge not the only, the biggest challenge. A lot of peer-pressure related situations happen to my guy friends too, like we're sitting in calculus, for example, and everyone is like oh my god the session is so boring, and they start you know uh commenting on the teacher and then they start you know later on when she'd say something insane that we all don't understand, they start cursing, and I'm like yeah, uhuh, I don't say anything because I'm not that person uh that's it, and usually outside of the classroom, you know, I see people and they also curse, and it's part of their language and it's part of their atmosphere. You know, I just, I just you know, I don't belong.
SANAA: So do you just remain silent? Or do you just leave or what do you do?
MAHMOUD: Well, eventually I do leave (laughter) because I mean it's not fun; it's not a funny environment to be in. but sometimes when I'm with friends and you know there's nothing else I can do, I mean I try to change the subject, but it's embedded in every single sentence. It's embedded.
SANAA: hem. But overall you feel your, like it's improving compared to your first semester.
MAHMOUD: Compared to last semester, yes. I've developed (laughter) strategies.

Internals\\Interviews\\Wave2\\Marina - § 1 reference coded [ 4.75% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 4.75% Coverage

MARINA: No but we're gonna have that in philosophical next semester.
SANAA: hem
MARINA: And a lot of people have told me just be aware of that; they're gonna get into your head and that kind of thing, so I'm actually excited about it (laughter). I'm excited to see what it's about.
SANAA: What do they mean "they will get into your head"? What do they mean?
MARINA: That's something almost everyone who talked to me about it, I actually talked about a girl who was on the verge of breaking down just because she told me I can't identify with my religion anymore, so I don't know.
SANAA: She's Christian?
MARINA: No she's Muslim.
SANAA: She's Muslim, uh.

MARINA: Yeah and she's like I'm, I can't talk to my parents about it; they're you know they would, they'd be …
SANAA: They'd be worried.
MARINA: Yeah (laughter) obviously.
SANAA: Because of the evolution theory or is it something else?
MARINA: um not the evolution theory; it was actually a theory that everything that is going on right now like is just inside my head like I made up this count[ry]; I made up this world; I made up Egypt; I made up my…
SANAA: one of the theories.
MARINA: Yeah.
SANAA: OK.
MARINA: Like I'm not having this conversation right now; it's in my head so that would just drive her crazy.
SANAA: And then she felt that, she felt guilty you know; it's all (laughter) basically I think that that would affect; philosophy particularly targets these.
SANAA: What did she feel guilty about it? I don't know her so you may talk; I won't be able to know who she is (laughter).
MARINA: No, no it's fine, but shall I be talking about her?
SANAA: Yes please I'm curious.
MARINA: Well she felt guilty that she's questioning because she like she's saying how can I have imagined something so beautiful as a flower, for example; only God can create something like that.
SANAA: So she felt guilty that she's being skeptical about the existence of God.
MARINA: Yeah, exactly. Yes.
SANAA: Did she solve this out now?
MARINA: I haven't talked to her (laughter), honestly.
SANAA: (Laughter) you have to check on her, the poor girl.
MARINA: Yeah I really felt, you know, and she's much older than me.
SANAA: So she warned you?
MARINA: She wasn't warning me. I just remember she looked really stressed out, she was in my computer science course; that's why I'm saying even if the course has nothing to do with it, it just comes up. So and then she looked really stressed out, so I was asking her what's wrong, and then she started telling me about it, and you know I tried help, I don't know, I tried telling her you know just uh…
SANAA: But you told me some people warned you.
MARINA: Yeah; she wasn't one of the people but a lot of other people warned me. I think…
SANAA: What exactly did they warn you against?
MARINA: They told me, this is exactly what they, like I'm literally quoting one of my Christian friends she told me "don't concentrate in class", like "you need to" (laughter). I'm not kidding she told me "don't concentrate on anything in class if you start like thinking about the ideas, they'll start getting into your head, you'll start believing them and then like your whole foundation is just gonna fall apart". So I am, like I am excited, I'm also gonna take it I think I'm gonna take part of…
SANAA: You will take it in Fall or Summer?
MARINA: Next Fall.
SANAA: Next Fall.
MARINA: Yeah (laughter)
SANAA: Probably my study will be over, but I would be curious to know, I would love to, to…
MARINA: I'll tell you what's going on.
SANAA: Yeah, yes
MARINA: I think I am gonna take a little bit of advice and that I'm not gonna take it take the issues at heart but I don't know how I can avoid that; like I don't know she's telling me like do the course, write the essays and that kind of thing but be detached…
SANAA: Detached.
MARINA: … from all of it, so I'm curious to see what that. I purposefully, I purposely didn't take it this semester because I knew it would be a large load; 18 credits and I have a lot of writing courses like Rhet 201 and the seminar and stuff, so I thought no do I need that stress on my mind? No not really, so that's why I'm taking it next semester.

**Sample 2: Language and national identity**
Internals\\Interviews\\Wave3\\Marina
1 reference coded, 10.02% coverage
Reference 1: 10.02% coverage
MARINA: I still avoid some words that I don't find pleasant (laughter).
SANAA: fakes? (laughter)
MARINA: fakes and all these words. I find myself asking like when people start talking only in Egyptian when we're outside the university; when we're in the university people speak half English, half Arabic, but when we're outside, people just start talking in this completely different language that is only for the youth of Egypt right now, like it's only been five years since they've been talking in this way, and I find myself asking what does that mean? What does that mean? All the time, so they figure it, they're like "you're not from Egypt. Are you?"
SANAA: ahah (laughter)
MARINA: And like [Unintelligible] that much, but yeah other than that, I think it's interesting.
SANAA: OK. You told me last time like you speak a lot of Arabic on campus. MARINA: Yeah.
SANAA: Even in classes. Is it still the same?
MARINA: Yes, purposefully (laughter).
SANAA: hem.
MARINA: I speak in Arabic like uh outside of class I speak almost exclusively in Arabic unless there's like an international student sitting with us, just because it makes people feel more comfortable, like they don't wanna be talking in English, but in class uh I'd say it's a mixture according to what the teacher prefers.
SANAA: Ok, yeah. And you're still not writing or reading in Standard Arabic? MARINA: No (laughter).
SANAA: Do you still read the newspaper occasionally?
MARINA: Yes.
SANAA: uhuh.
MARINA: And sometimes I'd like yeah, sometimes I'd read stuff if it interests me and someone tells me precisely to read that. I've even, like I've read Naguib Mahfouz in English because it was part of the course that, that's so, like I'm Egyptian I should read it in Arabic.
SANAA: When did you read it?
MARINA: It was last uh last three weeks.
SANAA: Talk to me about it because that's about Egyptian culture.
MARINA: Yeah.
SANAA: Right?
MARINA: It's wonderful; Oh my God, he's, he's a genius, and the way he loved Egypt, he, it's perfect, he idolizes Egypt, and that's sort of, that' s very similar to what I felt when I first came to Egypt, it was just like this perfect view and maybe because I still see it like my parents described it, which is fifty years ago, like they just describe it as this perfect place where there are trees and plants and people walk on the street and they're safe and that's the Cairo he saw and loved. And then like towards his later like when his later writings, he's become more cynical like Half a Day, the story Half a Day when everything just turned around; [Unintelligible] short stories where everything just turned around and he's an old man and Cairo had sort of withered. It's very sad; it's actually very touching, a lot of people don't see it that way but like I almost cried reading it.
SANAA: What course was that?
MARINA: Seminar.
SANAA: Seminar.
MARINA: Yes. We read a lot of texts from, we were studying all the civilizations, ancient Greece, ancient Mesopotamia, and then ancient Egypt and then modern Egypt, so it was very nice.
SANAA: OK. um how do you feel towards English and Arabic? Like what's your emotional relation with these languages? Which language do you feel more attached to? MARINA: I'd say more emotionally, I wouldn't say Arabic as a language, I'd say Egyptian, when I speak Egyptian I feel like I am more emotionally attached to it but in more I feel more safe when I'm talking in English because it's just been, it's what I grew up with because I feel like that's going back to an old camp, but when I speak in Arabic I just feel really part of the community, it just really affects me in that way. So I'd say I'm more emotionally attached to

the colloquial, not colloquial, Egyptian Arabic. SANAA: How about Standard Arabic? Do you have any emotional attachment to it? MARINA: Not really (laughter).
SANAA: Not really.
MARINA: Not really. I appreciate the language; when I read it, they have certain words to describe words that are not present in English or even in French. It's such a powerful language and people, like writers spend a lot of time just describing and that's really beautiful. I find that amazing when they use a lot of descriptive language. So I'm hoping when I take the Arabic course, I'd just get to understand it more because I haven't read a lot of Arabic, I haven't read enough to sort of feel that attachment.
SANAA: OK, so which of these languages do you identify with more?
MARINA: I would say if, if I was back home I'd say Egyptian, but here I think I would identify, like I identify with English because I'm thinking if someone was to categorize me, he'd say I'm one of the English speakers. That's just how I see it but, so I'd be identified as the person who was, because they keep, they ask me they tell me your accent is quite good, so they'd say why and then I have to tell them I was in a British school, and then they'd just identify me as one of the persons, like I see people who speak in French and I say they're French school.
SANAA: But how do you identify? That's how they identify you, how do you identify yourself?
MARINA: That's a philosophical question because I think we see ourselves the way people see us. In a way, yes, but that's why it's so, it's different, it's according to perception. When I'm back home I just see myself as an Egyptian person, that's how people see me because everyone else speaks English fluently and I'm one of the few people who speak Egyptian, so I think it's more according to how people see me.
Internals\\Interviews\\Wave1\\Heba
1 reference coded, 4.42% coverage
Reference 1: 4.42% coverage
HEBA: The thing is cause umm I speak Egyptian Arabic and I speak a little I have like an accent I speak like a Lebanese-Syrianish accent
SANAA: Where did you get that from?
HEBA: I have a lot of my really close friends who are Syrian-Lebanese.
SANAA: Here in Egypt?
HEBA: yaa'ny they come and go bas yaa'ny I'm I know the group really well fa sometimes like my accent usually I speak Egyptian yaa'ny bas sometimes like without like unconsciously I'd say like heyk [Lebanese "like that"] instead of keda [Egyptian "like that"] or like I don't know it comes in the middle of a conversation depending on how engaged I am in the conversation.
SANAA: And how do you feel about that?
HEBA: uhh usually I try to speak just the normal Egyptian Arabic because people always comment even my normal Egyptian Arabic there is uhh there is a slight uhh SANAA: Accent?
HEBA: Accent. I'm not really proud of it it's kind of for me it's embarrassing for people they find it…
SANAA: Cute (laughter)?
HEBA: aiwaa! [yes] (laughter) and I don't think it's cute khaless [at all].
SANAA: Alright.Do you think it makes you less Egyptian?
HEBA: No. I don't think so. I hope it doesn't yaa'ny. I hope people don't look at it that way.
SANAA: How do you feel about it?
HEBA: I don't think it makes me any less of an Egyptian.
SANAA: How do you think people feel about it?
HEBA: I don't know.
SANAA: Because some people say it's cute.
HEBA: ma it bothers me when they say it's cute. I feel like I'm a child (laughter)
Internals\\Interviews\\Wave2\\Alia
1 reference coded, 11.43% coverage
Reference 1: 11.43% coverage
SANAA: So did you, did you ever feel here at AUC, I mean I don't know perhaps during the first semester, that like you have to assert your Egyptian identity, like you feel it somehow
ALIA: No, I'm always saying that I don't need to be hanging around my friends and I know that they're Egyptians and they're always talking in English. Ya'any that pisses me off.

Ya'any I can understand you talk in English when there's a foreigner, but when you're all Egyptians, for example one who doesn't know how to speak English well, he's being national, that's fine. As long as we don't use English all the time just because oh my God, we're very cool ya'any.
SANAA: Are there people here?
ALIA: Yeah, there are.
SANAA: Did you meet some of them? Like are some of your friends like that?
ALIA: No, I don't get along with such people (laughter). I can deal with them a bit, yes I won't hate them ya'any but
SANAA: Do you avoid them? Do you avoid like hanging out with them?
ALIA: I don't avoid but I don't enjoy.
SANAA: uh.
ALIA: Ya'any it's like come on guys, there's no need for this we're so cool environment, speak in Arabic, we're Egyptians. We don't have to نعيش في الدور
SANAA: نعيش في الدور
ALIA: عيشو عيشة أهاليكو(laughter)
SANAA: (laughter).OK.
ALIA: ya'any I applied for ??????? fashion magazine last semester. I didn't get in because I alhamdolellah
SANAA: Is it an AUC magazine?
ALIA: It's called ?????? The girl who interviewed me, which is the editor in chief; I was going to kill her; She was like ya'any the first thing is it was a very, very non-professional interview. I mean she was interviewing me and told me she had a class in 10 minutes, first of all. Second, she told me I, what? Yeah, er friends told her the doctor moved the class to I don't know where, she's calling the maid to send her I don't know what with the driver, the doctor is calling her to tell her she moved the lesson to another place, and I'll wait for my friend to go to the toilet and then I'll go with her, things like this.
SANAA: All this in the interview?
ALIA: All this in 15 minutes.
SANAA: Yeah.
ALIA: And then she told me it's not impressive. I told her, I was completely silent, and then the interview itself wasn't impressive. I was trying to be accurate; she told me, who's your favorite designer? I told her in the absolute? There's no such absolute thing. I told her when you're talking professional fashion, people don't all make gowns, people don't all make bags, or they make bags
SANAA: Like in which
ALIA: Yeah, do you want me to tell you casual wear, dresses, or gowns, or shoes? For example there is one called Gustave Zanutti who only does shoes, so I could tell you it's him. Gucci, for example, his bags are good and his shoes are amazing but he's not very good when itt comes to clothes. Now tell me what do you want? She told me in general. Of course I, what should I tell her? And then, she was asking me questions always interrupting me "One second, I'll answer the maid" and she tells her "Yes, Marwa, could you please search for the blue thing?"(Alia imitates her voice); she answers like that, so I got nervous (laughter). No professionalism, no interview professionalism, and also this is the maid speak to her in good Arabic ya'any. This is my image of an AUCian. But there are some people who aren't like this ya'any, so I wouldn't hang up with her; I felt she was fake.
SANAA: So when you meet similar people, in this case you had to deal with her because it's an interview, but for instance when you meet those people that you described who only speak in English all the time and, how do you behave? What do you do?
ALIA: I be myself ya'any, I could speak some more English with them; it's not like I don't have the ability ya'any, but if they're all a group like this I can fit in with them. SANAA: So you speak in English like just to tell them I can speak English.
ALIA: It's not so, but if they're all a group, I won't, I have to respect that they're all like that. But I won't do this forever; I won't speak English all the time. But I can't become friends with them, because they are, I don't like the idea of "ouuuuf I wanna leave this country, I'm fed up", I can, we can all go to search for better opportunities, but you will never ever be accepted as you're accepted here even if you get a passport of another country, you'll never be, if you get an American passport, you're not an American, you're an Egyptian. And if the government there treats you as an American, the people would treat you as an Egyptian. Ya'any just get a life.

SANAA: Be yourself.
ALIA: Get a life and ya'any accept who you are; you don't have to always change yourself ya'any. For example, change your appearance; that's something you can change; if I wanna change anything to be [unintelligible]
Internals\\Interviews\\Wave2\\Aya
2 references coded, 2.48% coverage
Reference 1: 2.36% coverage
SANAA: Ok, um, alright. How about your national identity? I mean in some of the courses you mentioned, I mean they deal with religion and you were put in situations where you had to defend religion.
AYA: uhuh.
SANAA: How about being Egyptian? And you just told me that sometimes you feel this is not Egypt. AYA: (laughter) um ya'any, ya'any I speak, I tell you from my point of view as an Egyptian, it's not a big deal ya'any. laa ya'any I don't face any problem. ya'any what, what, what irritates me um when Egyptians don't know how to write, or how to write Arabic or how to read Arabic ya'any. They ya'any, at the beginning I thought they are ya'any, they are pretending that, like they are not baa, ya'any they don't know how to speak Arabic or to write Arabic, to show that I'm a high-class person. But uh when I faced them with some papers, they really didn't know how to read and write in Arabic. And I told them, people you're Egyptian, you're Arabs, you have to be proud of your nationality and your identity. ya'any how to, when you read Quran ya'any, how do you read it? And they told me we don't read Quran or something; it's only with English and we deal with English people, not English people, we deal with Western identities, so I think they have to know about their nationality and their identity, so this is the only thing ya'any, but overall as an Egyptian, I think uh ya'any um a'ady.
Reference 2: 0.12% coverage
SANAA: Doesn't make a difference (laughter).
AYA: bas [That's all].
Internals\\Interviews\\Wave3\\Mahmoud
2 references coded, 11.79% coverage
Reference 1: 1.58% coverage
SANAA: How about the AUC? Did it influence them in any way?
MAHMOUD: Did it influence them in any way? ..Could I say it enhanced?
SANAA: How did it do that?
MAHMOUD: uh again every time, when I look at other people in the rhetoric class, they would uh, or in other classes, they have trouble understanding, and trouble writing, and trouble expressing what they want to say, and I do it with ease, I do appreciate what I know, what I have.
SANAA: your English, I mean your language
MAHMOUD: Yeah.
SANAA: They are related. I mean the
MAHMOUD: I'm proud to be American in that sense.
SANAA: huh
MAHMOUD: In that sense.
SANAA: In the sense of being a fluent speaker?
MAHMOUD: In that sense yes.
SANAA: Of English. OK. Alright.
MAHMOUD: And vice versa.
SANAA: hem
MAHMOUD: when I see people who struggle with Arabic, I say "oh Hamdollah I'm Egyptian" because Arabic in Egypt is kind of the moderate Arabic
SANAA: hem, hem
MAHMOUD: Because in suriya and Lebnan if you'd hear someone "What are you saying?"especially in so'odiyya.
SANAA: hem
MAHMOUD: It's horrible
SANAA: hem
Reference 2: 10.22% coverage
SANAA: OK. uh you associate being American with open-mindedness, and with like education and learning and science

MAHMOUD: uhuh
SANAA: And you associate, you, you feel, I'm not sure about this, do you feel more like an Egyptian than an American?
MAHMOUD: In, in what way?
SANAA: uh in general, because like you're living in Egypt, right?
MAHMOUD: uh yes
SANAA: this is something I'm not sure of
MAHMOUD: Yes, definitely yeah
SANAA: We'll come back to this point in a minute
MAHMOUD: Yes, OK.
SANAA: And you associate being Egyptian like if, if you're proud being Egyptian, it's because of religion
MAHMOUD: uhuh
SANAA: You said it's mentioned in Quran, and if, if you were to compare being American and being Egyptian, then it's "American doesn't have religion" and therefore you would maybe
MAHMOUD: yeah
SANAA: you would side
MAHMOUD: yeah I would side with
SANAA: Egyptians
MAHMOUD: The Egyptian, yeah
SANAA: But I will ask you a question, when people ask you, what do you say? I'm Egyptian-American or I'm American-Egyptian?
MAHMOUD: I say I'm American-Egyptian
SANAA: uhuh
MAHMOUD: But I don't say that because I wanna say that I am an American and Egyptian, I just say that because that's how I ??? because you know when you you write a resume you Egyptian because the American comes first and I'm not
SANAA: you mean alphabetically speaking? (laughing)
MAHMOUD: Alphabeetically speaking, not because of "oh I'm American! Egyptian" sometimes in class, it just happened two days ago in Physics class, a girl she's excellent, and then she's like "khadna eeh delwa'ty?" oltelha "I have no idea", she looked at me keda and then mid-way through the class, she's like "enta lahgetak eeh?" I said "masry" SANAA: (laughing)
MAHMOUD: (laughing)I was like "masry" and she said "el english beta'ak helw awi"I said "I'm American too, ya'any" I. I don't like, I don't like saying "oh I'm American-Egyptian", and it happened also like two weeks ago, I applied for a research I wanna be a research assistant for graduate students in bio-technology, uh so I was sitting with a person and it was a girl sitting on the other table and I was like "Thank you so much for this opportunity" and then the girl was, she was like, "eeh dah, how anta what major are you?"I was like "Biology", she was "how anta masry?"I said like "yeah". and she was like "asl enta lahgetak helwa"
SANAA: English.
MAHMOUD: Yes English accent, I said "oh yeah because I'm American" and she said"Oh that's fine, that's fine"
SANAA: hem
MAHMOUD: so yeah, it's, it's, I don't wanna say I'm but there are some, some Egyptians who have really good English.
SANAA: Yes. I don't know, I know this is a question that frustrates people who have a dual nationality
MAHMOUD: uhuh
SANAA: I know
MAHMOUD: which one do you prefer?
SANAA: Yeah, and they don't have necessarily to prefer one
MAHMOUD: I know yeah but it's
SANAA: OK?
MAHMOUD: Yeah.
SANAA: But I have to ask you, not which one do you prefer, but if you were to uh, I mean do they play equal part in defining who you are? think about it, does it depend on the context? On the situation?

MAHMOUD: uhuh
SANAA: Because something it depends on the situation
MAHMOUD: uhuh
SANAA: or rhetorical situation, you told me at home it's like more Egyptian MAHMOUD: uhuh
SANAA: So if you could reflect on situations and conflicts which these two identities become more, in which situations does each one of them become more prominent?That would be a better way instead of the frustrating question that people say "Are byou Egyptian or American?"
MAHMOUD: Yeah.
SANAA: And then they have their little expectation
MAHMOUD: Exactly, exactly
SANAA: They want you to say either I'm Egyptian or I'm American
MAHMOUD: when I met, when I met this student who in FYE who told me he's majoring he's American, he's majoring in Arabic studies, so, so yeah when I talked to him I feel more American, like "oh I'm majoring in Arabic studies too!"
SANAA: hem
MAHMOUD: you can relate, I mean we're both from America, we're both same thing, that kind of sense
SANAA: hem
MAHMOUD: When I'm hanging out with my friends and going to a movie or doing whatever car-driving or eating at Shabrawy or public transportation, then I'm an Egyptian.
SANAA: hem
MAHMOUD: so yeah, it's more prominent because I'm in Egypt obviously wanna say Egypt is, my Egyptian nationality is a bit more fun, it's even more out there than my American because I'd feel that I want to hold back my American because I don't wanna bring attention to what I'm saying. For example in class if people are asking questions in Arabic, in calculus for example, last semester when the spring
SANAA: Spring
MAHMOUD: yeah spring. Uh ya doctor ana mesh fahma ya'any eeh dah? Tab momken nerage' section elli ableeha ana mesh fahma haga?I would usually say "I don't understand this section, I don't understand this part but if I would, if I would ask or when I did ask, I'd ask in Arabic because I don't wanna bring those unnecessary eyes on me that are like "eeh dah da walad amriki dah byetkalem baa wgamed geddan baa howa; that's what they think.
SANAA: yeah
MAHMOUD: So, yeah. I'd usually try to hide the American part of me because I don't wanna bring it up, I don't wanna bring the "oh! he's cocky, oh he's cocky speaking in English, oh he's da gamed geddan baa manetkalemsh ma'ah and so on"
SANAA: So, the example you gave is related to AUC.
MAHMOUD: uhuh.
SANAA: Is it the case outside AUC as well?
MAHMOUD: um well I don't usually speak in English outside AUC. With my friends, with the normal public I speak in Arabic a'ady, why would I speak in English.
SANAA: It's interesting I mean you're relating it to language.
MAHMOUD: hem, yeah
SANAA: all the examples
MAHMOUD: Yeah, this was never brought up good for you (laughing), good for you. Also when I'm on the phone when I'm walking in the street, usually I talk to my friends in English but when I see people around me I try to lessen English and and do the Arabic. I don't want people to think that I'm this shab gamed geddan
SANAA: cool (laughing)
MAHMOUD: Shab cool. They'd look at me and they have no problem looking at me inside AUC or outside AUC.
SANAA: hem
MAHMOUD: I don't know why. But you won't find this in America; if you're talking in Chinese, Japanese, oh ok, peace of cake
SANAA: Konichiwa is good afternoon in Japanese by the way
MAHMOUD: Yeah
SANAA: I learned some Japanese a long time ago, so I still remember. Yeah, did you watch a'assal eswed?

MAHMOUD: No.
SANAA: Did I ask you last time?
MAHMOUD: No.
SANAA: Did you watch the movie?
MAHMOUD: No.
SANAA: Did you hear about it?
MAHMOUD: My family I haven't seen it but I heard about it, yeah. It's he's American coming to Egypt.
SANAA: Yeah. I think you'll like it. It's available by the way on Youtube, the full uh, when you finish your courses.
MAHMOUD: watch it when I'm free. I'm not a big fan of TV.
SANAA: You will enjoy it.
MAHMOUD: Yeah.
SANAA: Yeah, and it's not very long.
MAHMOUD: It's not be on TV soon
SANAA: Really?
MAHMOUD: Since aflam eleid is gonna come and this will bring another movie so SANAA: Recycling
Internals\\Interviews\\Wave1\\Mahmoud
1 reference coded, 3.49% coverage
Reference 1: 3.49% coverage
SANAA: Alright. What do you think of Egyptians who choose not to speak in Arabic?
MAHMOUD: uuum. I mean from a superficial point of view if I don't know them, I'd think they either have reasons like me, they can't express themselves in Arabic. SANAA: I don't mean people who can't speak Arabic. They can, but they choose not to. You know maybe they even choose to speak to their children in English; that's how the children don't know, aren't fluent.
MAHMOUD: Yeah, maybe, maybe because I mean people who speak English it's because it's a universal language, I mean when you want somebody to be successful, you have to ask: do you do you know English? I mean English is a universal language so I think when parents teach their children about English, it's for their benefit but it's not it's not the lack of Arabic is they want them to pursue English.
SANAA: hem MAHMOUD: uuh but for..
SANAA: So you think it's for practical reasons?
MAHMOUD: Practical reasons, if it's family wise…
SANAA: Pragmatic reasons.
MAHMOUD: Pragmatic reasons yes definitely.
SANAA: OK, umm, does that make them less Egyptian?
MAHMOUD: Noo, not at all. No not at all no. No I don't think so, not in my opinion, no I don't think so. I think it makes them educated, yeah it makes them educated.
Internals\\Interviews\\Wave1\\Yassin
4 references coded, 11.01% coverage
Reference 1: 1.11% coverage
YASSIN: um, in Canada um I loved my life; Canada is amazing; it joins everything. I mean you, you, you study well and you don't have homeworks in the weekend, so you can hang out and you can do everything you want, right? um when I went to Egypt my dad had given me this really cool picture as in significantly cool, like way beyond Egypt's current standards. So it's like yes! Finally I'm going to Egypt (laughter). When I went to Egypt it was like a major disappointment. I was like oh no! Why? And then, so I was a bit sad at the beginning, and, and the fact that I didn't know any Arabic at that time, so going into school and talking to people who didn't really speak English that well was kind of difficult.uum.
Reference 2: 1.17% coverage
YASSIN: Arabic, uuh whenever someone hears me speaking in Arabic, they always say that my Arabic is shaky and it's really annoying (laughter) because (laughter) they always, they always make fun out of it (laughter), but uh I mean English is the international language and everyone, most of the countries I have been to people speak English and my English I mean is Canadian so I mean it's understandable, umm uuh it's not too American because American is awesome and stuff and it's not too British because British like oh yeah and all that stuff (laughter). We're in the middle, we're in the middle. So I loved the

English level that Canadians have. I, I'd really love to go deep into Arabic, I mean Arabic is a really rich language I mean …
Reference 3: 3.11% coverage
SANAA: And Egyptian, like when people ask you, do you say I'm Canadian or do you say I'm Canadian but of, what do you say?
YASSIN: um, I'm Canadian. I was raised up in Canada and my Canadian part is more, more, the majority of my identity but I'm still my dad is Egyptian and I can speak Arabic.
SANAA: When they ask you, where are you from? What do you answer? Let's say you're in another country.
YASSIN: Canada, Canada, Canadian.
SANAA: You say I'm Canadian.
YASSIN: Yeah, yeah I'm Canadian.
SANAA: And how about when you're in Egypt now and people ask you?
YASSIN: Egypt, uum.
SANAA: Do they ask you?
YASSIN: Yes they do
SANAA: So what do you say?
YASSIN: It's severely annoying, severely annoying.
SANAA: Do they ask you because of your Arabic accent or ?
YASSIN: and my English accent, both. because my English accent it's, it's not you know shaky and stuff.
SANAA: Yeah because I mean we also have Egyptian students who've been in Egypt and who speak fluent English, like I have many.
YASSIN: Really?
SANAA: Yes, they've been in like the American school all their lives and…
YASSIN: Oh yeah.
SANAA: Many of them, they really speak like native speakers and they've been in Egypt all their life.
YASSIN: wow. I mean I haven't come across that yet. I mean I could think of (laughter) I can easily pick out a you know the deficiencies in linguistics.
SANAA: Of course
YASSIN: I mean, it sticks out.
SANAA: (laughter) You must be picking deficiencies in my accent.
YASSIN: No, not at all, no, no, no. With professors I hardly find any, which is really cool. With students I mean it's like…
SANAA: So what do you answer when people ask you in Egypt: where are you from Yassin?
YASSIN: um, I tell them my dad's Egyptian, but I'm Canadian, I have a dual nationality.
SANAA: Yeah.
YASSIN: yeah, but I mean I tell them the whole history just to give them coverage of who I am. I mean you know yeah Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Canada.
SANAA: O.K.
YASSIN: The 3 entities that compose my character.
Reference 4: 5.62% coverage
SANAA: Do you think language and national identity are related or not necessarily?
YASSIN: um, I mean not national, sometimes I mean you can tell, you can tell people the nationality from the way they speak, I mean Egyptians have this really cool brilliant accent and I love it, and, and, and uh Syrians, right? uh I'm addicted to their uh I just love to listen to their
SANAA: and Lebanese, it's like singing.
YASSIN: Oh I know but it's really weird when guys talk in Lebanese.
SANAA: Yeah
YASSIN: Oh. It's girls, it's like oh.
SANAA: [unintelligible].
YASSIN: If it's girls, it's fine I'm cool with it, but guys it's like oh dear me.
SANAA: But you know it's not everybody, you know. It's some areas, because I know some Lebanese who are not from Beirut, for instance, and there are others in other areas and they talk I mean it's manly it's still manly, it's not effeminate you know.
YASSIN: Unfortunately, I know a lot of Beirut is which cause a lot of ear noise pollution, ear damage.

SANAA: You must have met lots of them in Saudi Arabia.
YASSIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah tons.
SANAA: Alright. um, what's your, I mean you're, you're, you've been raised in the West. What's your attitude towards Westernization of the Arab World, of Egypt? YASSIN: It's pathetic.
SANAA: Is it positive? Is it negative?
YASSIN: It's absolutely negative, extremely, severely, titanicly negative.
SANAA: hem
YASSIN: They're not proud of their identity. Arabs in recent times all they want to do is be like them. I don't know why; they're not proud of the fact that their grandfather is the prophet PBUH and their grandmother is Aicha and they're not proud of it. I mean personally when I think of the fact that Hajar, the wife of prophet Ibrahim is from Egypt I feel proud.
SANAA: very proud of being Egyptian?
YASSIN: Yes, yes of being Egyptian and the fact that lots of the prophets came from Arabia, it's…
SANAA: In Egypt, we have Moses and…
YASSIN: Moses and Youssef.
SANAA: And Jesus Christ, and also…
YASSIN: We have Youssef was here.
SANAA: Yes youssef of course.
YASSIN: yeah, yeah, yeah. I was watching the, there's a TV series Youssef assedeeq.
SANAA: He's one of my favorite prophets by the way.
YASSIN: really?
SANAA: My son is called Youssef and I named him after the prophet.
YASSIN: I mean the story is inspiring.
SANAA: Yeah.
YASSIN: I mean and it's a real inspiration but I mean Arab countries, when I look outside into uh when I look at the Gucci corner, you know the Gucci corner, right? Yes?
SANAA: Yes of course.
YASSIN: That is definitely weird, definitely not in Egypt; definitely, no way. When I see that I'm not in Egypt, because they, I don't know if they're trying to do it intentionally or have they been dragged into it but they're not, they're not Arabs, they're not, I mean they talk English most of the time. I speak more Arabic than people over here. I don't know why, they're like, I mean most of my friends they do speak Arabic, but girls, um, yeah girls I speak more Arabic than them which is weird because I'm the Canadian, I'm the one who' s supposed to speak in English.
SANAA: Yes you're the native speaker.
YASSIN: yeah, yeah and they're the ones who speak English so that's weird. They're not proud and, and, and it's really sad to see that fact. [unintelligible] different times and different measures. I'm not saying we're gonna ride camels, I'm not saying that, but at the same that I'm not saying that we wear you know skinny jeans and try to act you know all cool and Canadian or American and all that stuff. I mean I'm Canadian I'm not all happy.
Internals\\Interviews\\Wave1\\Khaled
3 references coded, 5.57% coverage
Reference 1: 2.55% coverage
SANAA: Because some people think that with that scientific knowledge there are other things you know; the culture, the other things that could affect the students' identities.
KHALED: Well, I really don't believe that. Egyptian culture is very strong. I mean if you studied the history, if you studied the history I mean you find the French came, when they came to conquer Egypt, the Egyptians didn't get affected by the French culture as much as the French culture got affected by the Egyptian. I mean the French culture in order to control Egypt, they started speaking Arabic; they started to dress like us, but it's not like for instance maghrib [Morocco]; they speak French there, and also when the English, uuh England conquered Egypt and before that Hyksos and every kind of conqueror that Egypt has experienced, they didn't get influenced as much with the other culture, which means that the Egyptian culture is very strong, so and here also in AUC, I think that the same case, you know.
Reference 2: 1.23% coverage
SANAA: Could you tell it to me in Arabic?

KHALED: Yeah I know I don't think it is that clear. He said like elard dee baalha miaat eseneen betetsere' welessa feeha kheir beyetsere' [This land has been robbed for hundreds of years and it still has richness that is being robbed].
SANAA: lessa feeha kheir?
KHALED: yetsere'
SANAA: yetsere'; alright.
KHALED: Yeah, I guess my English is not that good? (laughter)
SANAA: No, it is. I just wanted to hear the original, like what they said.
Reference 3: 1.79% coverage
SANAA: Does that make them less Egyptian in your opinion?
KHALED: No it doesn't, why? I mean Egyptian is not in a language or in anything; it's just, more important is the love of the country, but in a sense probably if they are that influenced by English, then by large then they are more influenced by the Western world which then means they don't love this country so much, so yeah it's debatable, you know.
SANAA: It's debatable.
KHALED: Yeah it can be. One guy he really loves the country but he just find English easier, then no it doesn't make him less Egyptian, but the other he speaks English because he's ashamed of that country; he's leaving it, so no that makes him less of an Egyptian; it depends.
Internals\\Interviews\\Wave3\\Yassin
2 references coded, 11.51% coverage
Reference 1: 4.64% coverage
YASSIN: Again, um people have constantly been criticizing my Arabic, which made me stick to my English. Uh Arabic still remains a problem for them and for me; apparently so and we can't understand each other.
SANAA: And you link the ability to speak Arabic with Egyptianess
YASSIN: Yeah, well basically people say that. I know how to speak Arabic well but I don't know how to speak colloquial Arabic as well
SANAA: hem
YASSIN: And Colloquial Arabic is something that defines Egyptians.
SANAA: hem
YASSIN: I mean you can tell out an Egyptian easily by their language. The fact that I don't know, that I don't have that ability to speak colloquial Arabic as good as many others and that I have to ask for the meanings for lots of words um usually ends up me feeling less of an Egyptian than I'd necessarily feel if I knew some stuff.
SANAA: hem, so is it the others who make you feel so, or do you initially feel so? YASSIN: I, I have, it's like, I have a seed and they just water it.
SANAA: hem
YASSIN: They , I, there's a seed inside; it isn't growing and it's very dormant.
SANAA: hem
YASSIN: They stimulate it with some water and some criticizing and some laughing.
SANAA: OK. so aside, language aside
YASSIN: Language aside
SANAA: Did the AUC have any, uh I mean affect the way you're constructing your national identity in any way?
YASSIN: Not my identity, but it's been distorting my, my picture of others and how they should respect their national identity, um people of here still act as they were at the beginning of the year; they're still committed to being non-Arab
SANAA: hem
YASSIN: they still have this stupid desire to be uh like others like foreigners and they don't respect the fact that they're Egyptians. And they don't take, they speak English as their first language which is for some I know some were raised outside and those are exceptions but for those that people over here they speak Arabic and they have fun and they should be just more Egyptian like they couldn't be American ; they shouldn't try to, try to blend in with the American system.
SANAA: So do you think that by speaking Arabic, English more than Arabic, I mean like does that make them less of an Egyptian?
YASSIN: It does, it does. I associate language theoretically with your national identity. Um your language defines you at the end of the day. Your best usually tells where you're from. I mean you can tell out an Egyptian easily by his language.

SANAA: hem
YASSIN: some people look different, but the fact is that some of them they don't have accents and stuff and it becomes difficult for someone like me to distinguish whether they are Egyptians or not, and that's not good. they should, they should be Egyptian and they should be proud that they are Egyptians; they shouldn't
Reference 2: 6.87% coverage
SANAA: Alright. uh are you able to fully express these two national identities you've just described at AUC and construct them the way you want?
YASSIN: the Canadian one is very easy; people accept it quite easily from you. um when I speak in English or when I speak about Canada, it's very obvious that I know quite well about my Canadian identity, but due to the fact that I haven't been living in Egypt so much, I find it difficult to get that message across and what with my outstanding Arabic skills um it doesn't help much. The Egyptian part, I can, I can try I try at the end of the day it's still quite difficult.
SANAA: hem
YASSIN: people don't accept the fact that I'm Egyptian because of my accent they have this doubt in their mind. It's, it's gonna be there. I can understand them. My language it's very obvious apparently to them that I'm not, I'm not that fully 100% Egyptian or 60% in this case, so, so yeah
SANAA: so obviously when you think about Egyptian identity, you mainly think of language.
YASSIN: Yeah I mean language helps you express yourself, your ideas and how you wanna get because I can't use my English to speak to someone. So, so basically I associate the fact that I I; of course language starts a whole channel, branches of stuff
SANAA: but the reason it increased if I understood properly is not necessarily due to language
YASSIN: It's, it's
SANAA: It's more about politics.
YASSIN: Yeah, yeah, it's more about, it's more about being involved in the country than uh
SANAA: hem
YASSIN: I'm not involved with the people. With people, I associate it with language, but with the country as a whole, it's more politics
SANAA: so does the AUC give you any opportunities to be involved with politics? YASSIN: Never! I win debates here really the people here are it's very very easy to if you say sandwiches can fly, they'll probably accept it. It's very easy to win anything over here
SANAA: hem
YASSIN: People don't listen to politics; uh they're more concerned with fashion and uh sports and, so, so, they're those small tiny minds it's very easy anything. I mean I don't try to convince
SANAA: hem
YASSIN: but when I start talking politics either A) they change the subject or B) they listen and they accept what you say, whatever it is.
SANAA: so, does that mean you're unhappy with the way your identity is constructed here like you're not given the opportunity to um
YASSIN: uh get into the Egyptian culture properly
SANAA: hem, yes.
YASSIN: Yeah, yeah definitely. Over here the, over here
SANAA: hem
YASSIN: It's true people have said to me before that it's very difficult for you to actually recognize your Egyptionality over here
SANAA: uhuh
YASSIN: It's very, you feel over here that it's not Egypt.
SANAA: hem
YASSIN: That's what I've been told and it's true.
SANAA: what have you been doing about it?
YASSIN: about people?
SANAA: about this, about
YASSIN: um I've been trying to convince um people who speak English, I've been speaking Arabic with them. So that they will speak Arabic as well.

SANAA: Let me rephrase it just to make sure you understand it, like what have you been, uh how have you been negotiating your national identity since it's a combination of Canadian and Egyptian
YASSIN: uhuh
SANAA: what did you do to, how did you negotiate them within the context of AUC?
YASSIN: um the Canadian one uh it wasn't negotiable; it was quite obvious from the beginning. I didn't have to negotiate anything. it was they see me I don't look that much Egyptian and I I have a Canadian accent, so uh the Canadian one was just a given; it was just a it was there, I didn't have to do anything about it. The Egyptian one I had to, talking about politics, in uh with people uh it helps a lot, it stimulates this Egyptian personality over at the end of the day no matter where I am from I'm still Egyptian, I'm still care about this country. Uh so politics has been, talking about politics has been slightly negotiable about my Egyptian identity and uh criticizing people about their smelly Arabic and how too
SANAA: you're being obviously ironic (laughing)
Internals\\Interviews\\Wave1\\Alia
2 references coded, 7.27% coverage
Reference 1: 2.62% coverage
SANAA: did you study any Arabic?
ALIA: yeah, we studied Arabic from the first grade.
SANAA: Is it advanced Arabic or?
ALIA: Well, we study the ministry books but umm in twelve grade we stop doing that because that didn't meet the criteria of the German Abitur if you wanted to do Arabic and the German Abitur we had to do it their way so in the 12th grade we read novels by Naguib Mahfouz, by Abbas El-Akkad.
SANAA: They're quite complex and advanced.
ALIA: Yeah. Also Tawfik Al-Hakim . we read we rod we read their books and we analyzed them. We've been analyzing ever since I could remember. The ninth, eight grade we've been analyzing short stories, novels, whole novels, uuum fiction, non-fiction, texts, articles, speeches, in Arabic, we always did like umm not main projects but yaa'ny uuuh…
SANAA: Presentations?
ALIA: laa not presentations. We worked on the ministry uuuh ministry books but we also had private projects at school we read stories and we analyzed them and we talked about them but we didn't usually get grades for them specially in the earlier years. But um we read them and we had to analyze them in our own way, Arabic, English German, and that's the main thing that we've been doing.
Reference 2: 4.66% coverage
ALIA: yeah, I don't know. I think each plays a different role in my life. German is the reason I have to be thankful for German and Germans for who I am today. Arabic is my ident.. is my native is my roots and English is actually the language that I really, really like. I don't, if I'm watching movies, I'm watching them in English. If I'm listening to music I listen to it in English. I think it has for me the effect a global language would have on any person. I think here as yaa'ny I like here in Egypt, I think in our society English plays a huge role than in most of the world I think I believe I don't know but I think we have to speak English perfectly because it's too yaa'ny you have to because of your social standard that's what you're supposed to be. You have to listen to music in English, you have to watch the foreign movies in English, and I do that, but I don't like the people who actually say that we don't watch Arabic movies, we don't listen to Arabic music, I hate that. I think that they're just people who want to get rid of their roots and I believe that if you can yaa'ny there are there are there's no rule even you can actually hear an Arabic song, it may be good why are you saying that all Arabic singers they're bad? There might be actually ones that are good, you have to give it a shot and listen. People are that are prejudging everything because it's Arabic, I think they're not proud of who they are and I think they would have a huge problem in their later lives because even if they do go out of Egypt and they do live in Europe or in the states. If you don't, if the people don't get the impression that you're proud of who you are and you're proud of your roots, then the people will never trust you because you grew up in your country, you lived there, you ate from the, from the seeds of this country, you have to be thankful. It has given you something. It has given you your identity your passport is because of this country. So, you don't go there and just, and if you get rid of your identity, then you could get rid of anything in your life. You have to be, to be, to cherish the things that are given to you in order to be happy and actually to get through.

## Appendix G: Description of Students' Clubs

**SuperMuslims**. This is an NGO started outside AUC. "SuperMuslims' purpose is to reawaken the Muslims inside of us and to make our iman [belief] and our bond with Allah (SWT) [God almighty] grow stronger" (SuperMuslims, 2017)

**Resala AUC**. "Resala is a community service organization that manages charitable projects. It has proven its success for years all over Egypt and it has many branches through which it can communicate with people and perform its duties. Resala-AUC focuses mainly on awareness campaigns and teaching in Al-Deweiqa, as well as holding Keswa (clothes) fairs, holding blood drives, running medical awareness campaigns, supporting microprojects, and running house-repair projects" (Resala AUC, 2017).

**Help Club** is "A Leading Community service club in the American University in Cairo since 1995" whose aim is "to instill in ourselves the sense of responsibility towards the challenges of our society, and to work professionally to build the future that we desire" (Help Club, 2017).

**Sabeel.** "It is the core of Sabeel Club that provides the learning Environment to the community of Sabeel to live our lives on the basis of Islam and worshiping Allah SWT [almighty] through weekly sessions in which we increase our knowledge" (Sabeel, 2017).

**Serenity Society** is an AUC student club whose aim is:

> to seek knowledge⋯the kind of knowledge that leads to understanding, tolerance and serenity⋯ not the one that leads to polarization, discomfort or disturbance. We have faith. We seek peace. We seek Serenity in our Society. "Those who believe and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah, for verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest" (Qur'an 13:28) { الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُم بِذِكْرِ اللّهِ أَلاَ بِذِكْرِ اللّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ}. (Serenity, 2017)

Their activities include public lectures on Islamic topics, Quran recitation gatherings, outings and trips, and weekly meetings "where [they] go deeper in Islamic meanings & values to learn more about Islam and its teachings' comprehensiveness" (Serenity, 2017).